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3

GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE BODY:
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

COLLECTION OF PAPERS

EDITORS

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Introduction

Gender, Sexuality and the Body: critical perspectives is a collection of papers that showcases a parcel of the work presented and discussed in a two-day Seminar organized by Sofia Aboim and Pedro Vasconcelos in July 2013. Under the umbrella of a critical angle that might enable us to further enhance our knowledge of themes and perspectives, emergent topics and old questions, empirical sites and theoretical prospects, this seminar aimed at creating a platform for putting on view research carried out in Portugal and in other countries. Our purpose, which was successfully accomplished, was to bring together scholars working in the vast field of gender, sexuality and the body, therefore reuniting different perspectives, theoretical insights, empirical terrains and findings, but also individuals with different backgrounds, coming from different places – geographically and theoretically – and also in different career stages.

Over the past few decades, a number of crucial challenges led to further reflection about the supremacy of a male-dominated hetero-normative gender order, thus shaking the traditional linkages between hegemony and subordination, and enlarging the field of gender studies. Since its emergence from feminisms, gender studies have become one of the most challenging disciplines, whose rapid development is evident in today's leading scholarship. Yet, as all challenging academic fields, gender studies are not moulded by one and single perspective, but rather move forward thought what can often be seen as heated discussions between very different views on social theory, methodologies, streams of feminist thought and conceptualizations on power and oppression, materiality and discourse, disciplinary perspectives and even personal positioning towards and involvement in activism for gender and sexual rights.

The seminar enabled us to put into practice an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and perspectives on the issues of gender, sexuality and the body in contemporary societies, an ambitious triangulation of entangled terms that intended to open the range of topics under discussion and elevate the debate. The papers collected will give readers just a glimpse of the topics presented, reflected upon and debated during two days. However, they all reflect, in one way or the other, key trends and problems in the field of gender not only in Portugal but rather in international and transnational terms, covering key topics such as men and masculinities; gender, relationships and the life course; the place of women in society(ies); sexualities and transgender issues.

Crises of Masculinity and Narratives of Decay: Historical Reflections on Gender, Embodiment, and Decline

Christopher E. Forth

Abstract
Building upon and revising the author's previous work on the history of "crises of masculinity" in the modern West, this brief article engages with the work of the historians Stefan Dudink and Roger Griffin, among others, to reflect on whether, in addition to its connection to the disruptions posed by modernity, the idea of a masculinity "crisis" may also reflect male misgivings about embodiment that cannot be neatly contained within a modern temporal framework. From this perspective "crisis" may be an extension of the irreducible ambiguity of embodiment that has historically been played out in distinctively gendered ways.

It's unfashionable nowadays to discuss masculinity in terms of "crisis." Objections to the idea of a "crisis of masculinity" have been raised from across the political spectrum, from feminists who see in it a patriarchal call to reactivate retrograde gender politics to conservatives who detect a feminist ploy to undermine maleness itself. Others have rightly pointed out that any notion of a masculinity crisis assumes that, once upon a time, there was this thing called "masculinity" that existed in a state of coherence and continuity until being disrupted by any number of threats and challenges. Putting this idea to the test, in a recent work (Forth 2008) I approached the idea of gender crisis less as an empirical or episodic reality than as a structural feature of Western modernity closely linked to shifting perceptions and experiences of the male body. This analysis of three hundred years of history found that gender crises may be viewed as being to some extent linked to tensions between the two faces of modernity: 1) the proliferation of an urban, scientific, secular, materialist, and individualist worldview, but also 2) the disorienting and destructive consequences of such developments, including: unhealthy living conditions, the exploitation of human and natural resources, the erosion of traditional behavioural patterns and communities, a loss of meaning in a secular and materialist world, and the generation of new health problems affecting people in body and mind. If one face of modernity reinforced male domination in important ways, the other threatened to erode the corporeal foundations upon which masculinity was said to stand. Founded

upon the central paradoxes of modernity, I argued, crises of masculinity appear to be structural features of Western life.

Modernity and gender disruption do seem to go hand in hand, and it is interesting to note that the very concept of "crisis" emerged only during the eighteenth century, which is when many of these modern challenges to masculinity really became pronounced (Koselleck 2006). Yet it is wrong to assume, as this emphasis on modernity does, that the premodern world represented a non- or pre-critical period for Western masculinity. Judging from recent scholarship (McNamara 1994; Cullum and Lewis 2004), the Middle Ages did not represent a period of gender stability, and history in fact reveals a seemingly endless series of "crisis moments" extending back to antiquity, where even the Greeks and Romans complained about how "luxury" threatened to "soften" manhood (Davidson 1997; Dalby 2000). Moreover, even if crisis emerged as a "structural signature of modernity" (Koselleck 2006), the roots of the concept are not modern at all. Rather they flow back to ancient medical terminology that had been interwoven over time with legal and political thought. Among physicians a "crisis point" was observed when a patient's medical condition could go either way. Crisis was thus an opportunity for "critique" (the root of the English word "crisis") as well as a demand for a decision on a course of action. This medical metaphor revealed a durable yet implicit association of socio-political change with models of a body subjected to the processes of rise and decline that are implicit to organic existence. Anxieties about the body politic were thus implicitly understood as disruptions of the presumably "natural" manifestations of a body that – according to medical conventions inherited from antiquity – most would have assumed to be male. "At all times," Koselleck (2006, p. 361) notes, "the concept [of crisis] is applied to life-deciding alternatives meant to answer questions about what is just or unjust, what contributes to salvation or damnation, what furthers health or brings death."

Arguably, then, the notion of crisis carries within it ideas about male bodies in a state of dis-ease and subject to change over time. In the brief discussion that follows I engage with the work of the historians Stefan Dudink and Roger Griffin, among others, to reflect on whether, in addition to its connection to the disruptions posed by modernity, the idea of a masculinity "crisis" may also reflect male misgivings about embodiment that cannot be neatly contained within a modern temporal framework.

While most gender scholars acknowledge the historical, and therefore changeable, nature of masculinity, few have addressed the temporal dimensions of "modern" masculinity in any depth. The Dutch historian Stefan Dudink is an exception. Early modern masculinity, Dudink (2004) argues with reference to the Netherlands, had little in common with the "naturalized categories of identity" that would emerge by the nineteenth century. Rather than being defined with reference to biological differences between males and females, this masculinity was haunted more by the ongoing threat of "effeminacy" that was implicit to the classical republican political model that was dominant in the eighteenth century. Ever since antiquity, Dudink explains, republics were considered unstable political forms that would inevitably degenerate through luxury and vice into more abject associations. Classical political time thus operated in accordance with organic cycles of birth, decay, death and rebirth. Insofar as they were metaphorically equated with the body politic in flux, appeals to the superior virility of classical manhood were thus always rather tentative propositions. As Dudink (2004) suggests, "the trope of effeminacy implied that masculinity – and the political liberty it supported – could never be assumed but always had to be guarded or regained, and therefore it called for permanent vigilance and constant action" (pp. 89-90). As was the case in other countries during the eighteenth century, in the Netherlands the problem of consumer culture was often debated with reference to classical models that warned that any nation succumbing to "luxury" would soon find itself following the same downward trajectory as Rome. Rather than "a fixed category that came with the possession of a male body" masculinity was "a precarious disposition easily lost" through the adoption of "foreign" customs. Dudink submits that the shift to a more "modern" understanding of masculinity took place around the same time that ideas about linear political time gradually supplanted traditional cyclical notions inherited from the ancients. Being more fully grounded in the bedrock of the male body "modern" notions of masculinity facilitated imaginative links between the virtues of heroes of the Dutch past and the latent potential within the hearts of contemporary men. They also euphemized explicit references to masculinity into the seemingly more inclusive and gender-neutral categories of "the people" and "the nation."

A few caveats should be observed before unpacking some of the implications of Dudink's argument. Even if it is true that, by the nineteenth century, masculine and feminine ideals were increasingly seen as "natural" extensions of sexually dimorphic bodies, as Thomas Laqueur (1990) and others propose, the mere possession of such bodies has never served as an adequate support for masculinity or femininity. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was the poverty of biological models that was revealed as commentator after commentator bemoaned the extent to which gender comportment *failed* to actualize the supposed destiny of anatomy. When it comes to masculinity "modern" linear political time did not completely supplant the "cyclical" temporalities inherited from antiquity, a point that Dudink (2004) himself concedes when he too observes (but does not explain) the persistence of cyclical ideas about "effeminacy" even in the nineteenth century. This suggests that modern masculinity (along with many other forms of identity) is bound to multiple temporalities that cannot be readily reduced to politics in the way that Dudink seems to define it. The old notion of "effeminacy" thus continued to function as "'an intimate other,'" as Dudink puts it, "a danger residing in the history of the political community and the individual citizens themselves" (p. 7).

When we recall Koselleck's (2006, p. 361) claim that crisis points call for decisions between that which "furthers health or brings death," what is interesting about Dudink's (2004) analysis is his claim that, by seemingly adopting a more linear sense of time, the Dutch Patriot movement imagined a form of masculinity that stood "outside the grip of the cycle of rise and decay" (p. 86). In order to justify their political intervention proponents of cyclical political time mobilized a "narrative of decay" that, not unlike recent "crisis discourses," urgently called for the gendered regeneration of the country (p. 88). In so doing this narrative highlighted "the entire chain of cause and effect of decay" that, by moving along the slippery slope that led from commerce through wealth, luxury, weakness, and corruption to its ultimate end in tyranny (p. 83), was modeled on observations about organic processes extending back to antiquity. Similar narratives may be observed in the neoclassical critiques of luxury made in other countries, a concept whose ancient sources referred to organic overgrowth leading to decomposition or "corruption" and remained operative in commentaries on the feared physical and moral consequences of consumerism for men (Dalby 2000; Forth 2012).

While "crisis" and "corruption" are hardly identical concepts, they are certainly fellow travelers. If, following Koselleck (2006), we approach crisis as a turning point as well as a moment of decision, then it is clear that corruption is one of the alternatives on the table. As defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "corruption" denotes physical decomposition along with the loathsome putrefaction that accompanies it, which seems implicit in related definitions describing "the perversion of anything from an original state of purity," be it something organic or moral. That decay implies a pre-existing state of purity or integrity is revealed in the fact that *corruptio* is also a biblical term denoting mortality in the face of God's eternity and therefore human distance from divinity (Génaux 2004, pp. 14, 20). More overtly than the concept of luxury, corruption points to the decomposition of a body as well as the emotional response this process usually elicits, which allows for its uses outside of the spheres of politics and religion. Misgivings about corruption also seem to be bound up with concepts of purity which, according to Robbie Duschinsky (2011, p. 148), almost always assume a "pre-temporal essence" from which that designated as "impure" deviates. More recently Duschinsky (2013, p. 719) proposes that this "essential ideal" also contains "an imputed, qualitatively homogeneous essence" or pure self-identity. In fact the "pure" in this formulation bears a striking resemblance to the condition in which masculinity is often assumed to be prior to a supposed "crisis" period: as "*self-identical and complete*" (2011, p. 152). That which falls away from the supposed timelessness of essential masculinity thus takes on aspects of the "impure" which, as Duschinsky (p. 154) argues, "is first of all a social strategy for occluding the contingency of an essential ideal, and for regulating those physical and social elements thereby classified as essential or inessential." As a concept, then, "effeminacy" has links to a corruption that is tacitly organic and thus biological.

However metaphorical such images may be when applied to the body politic, they must be taken literally when understood in the context of the personal bodies that comprised the state. After all, we may safely say that decay and death are facts of life for all bodies, and that to imagine a male (or any other) body capable of existing outside of the "cycle of rise and decay" cannot be very successful if the primary alternative is simply another body. In addition to being relevant for women as well as men, perhaps this is a universal condition: anthropologist Maurice Bloch (1992, p. 3)

even proposes that "the vast majority of societies represent human life as occurring within a permanent framework which transcends the natural transformative process of birth, growth, reproduction, ageing and death." Narrowing his focus to Western culture Jonathan Dollimore (1998, p. xiii) offers a more restrained observation: ever since antiquity "the process of change and decline *in time* is more disturbing than the idea of not being at all" (emphasis in original). Seeking to secure the authenticity of masculinity by anchoring it to bodily difference can only work if the male body is itself imagined as ideally existing outside of organic time. To imagine male bodies capable of breaking the "cycle of rise and decay" would thus require a paradoxical – yet rather common – fantasy of the *embodied transcendence of embodiment*. While the specificities of historical context must always be accounted for, this desire to create bodies that transcend the limits of corporeality may reflect a deep-seated tendency that is inflected by, but also *precedes*, the specific challenges posed by modernity.

A full examination of such an idea is well beyond the scope of this short article, but some historians have suggested ways in which such research could be undertaken. In his provocative study *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, the British historian Roger Griffin (2007) claims that, lurking behind what many scholars see as a bewildering array of different forms of "modernism," be they aesthetic or social and political in nature, is "a common matrix" that may be "usefully seen as the search for transcendence and regeneration" (p. 39) that is itself a variation of the archaic myth of rebirth, or what he calls "palingenesis." Terror at the prospect of decay and eventual non-existence is for Griffin the key to understanding the recurrence of this myth and the ways in which it is manifested in the modern era. Drawing upon a diverse array of disciplines and theoretical positions, from anthropology and psychology to Terror Management Theory and the sociology of religion, Griffin observes what he calls "a species-defining need – a drive, an instinctive will – to transcend their inexorable personal mortality, a feat they are able to achieve, if only symbolically, through mind-power, the extraordinary creativity of their mythopoetic, ritual, and symbolic consciousness" (p. 78). Just as there is a dual time consciousness to modernity, Griffin recognizes a "dual temporality at the experiential core of human existence" (p. 80). On one hand there is "the linear temporality of a single, ephemeral, unrepeatable life rushing headlong towards eternal extinction" (pp.

80-1), and on the other "an imagined suprapersonal, social, anthropocentric, or cosmocentric perspective in which each individual life and death, even one's own, is seen as part of a suprapersonal, transcendent scheme of things" (p. 83). Griffin sees modern nationalism as functioning as a sort of "sacred canopy" sheltering citizens from the terror of nonexistence in an increasingly secular world by offering a suprapersonal community with which to identify and find meaning. The quest for transcendence thus need not take overtly religious forms, though they often do, and it is no surprise that a great many religious conservatisms accord an almost sacred status to masculinity as such.

This way of approaching modernisms in general – be they mainly aesthetic in focus or more socially and politically oriented – allows Griffin to argue that, as utopian movements, fascism and communism must be viewed as left- and right-wing variants of a more diffuse "modernism" that gained momentum in the West from the mid-nineteenth century onward (even if this claim has been often disputed by scholars who insist on the fundamental tensions between fascism and modernism). What is less developed in Griffin's account is the implicitly *gendered* nature of the various forms of rebirth generated by aesthetic and political modernisms. The much anticipated "New Man" often imagined in modern times is quite often an implicitly male being requiring some rejuvenated form of woman as his partner and breeder. Thus the regeneration promised by many modernist social programs often entails a restoration of traditional gender roles – the (re)creation of "real" men and women – in an social order that believes it has jettisoned the degenerative elements of modernity while remaining recognizably modern. Both the *homo sovieticus* imagined in Russia after 1917 (Clark 1993) and the "anthropological revolution" (Gentile 2004) proposed by fascist theorists in Italy may be viewed as further extensions of this deeply ingrained modern response to modernity's excesses. Revolution, regeneration, and rejuvenation all presupposed a future that has been reconnected to the most "healthy" and admirable models of the past, and while women were hardly left out of the picture, all seemed preoccupied with the heroic reconstruction of masculinity in body and mind.

Griffin's approach to the modern is suggestive because it provides a link between seemingly archaic, and therefore non-modern, anxieties about mutability and mortality and the specific challenges posed by modernity, especially in relation to the

"narratives of decay" that Dudink identifies. Cultural demands for the regeneration of masculinity have paced modernist calls for rebirth, and we might say that – insofar as men were considered to represent and embody the collective in ways that women could not – many modernist demands for change could be construed as implicit calls for an alteration (or restoration) of masculinity and the elimination or radical reduction of all that generates ambiguity in gender behavior and roles. If we accept such generalizations as being more or less plausible, the challenge is to separate out the specifically male or "masculine" dimensions of such transcendent projections – in other words, to probe the ways in which anxieties about mutability have been gendered. Is there a specific way of engaging with the terror of mortality and selective contempt for animality that is particular to certain "masculine" ideals? Is masculinity predicated on fantasies of transcending the very organic process to which women are so often seen as immanently bound, even as women's bodies have been culturally compelled to project a similar conquest of time? In other words, how do we gender the *homo transcendens* that is at the core of Griffin's study?

More research is needed to approach properly such questions, but part of the conceptual groundwork for such a project is already in place. Judith Butler (1993, p. 21) sees this transcendent fantasy at work in representations of "the figure of human reason" in the Western philosophical tradition, a figure that is in fact the image of "'man' as one who is without a childhood; is not a primate and so is relieved of the necessity of eating, defecating, living and dying." Poised between a dematerialized self-representation and the inescapability of embodiment, such a figure is for Butler always in a state of crisis: "This is a figure of disembodiment, but one which is nevertheless a figure of a body, a bodying forth of a masculinized rationality, the figure of a male body which is not a body, a figure in crisis, a figure that enacts a crisis it cannot fully control." But rationality is just one domain in which a male flight from corporeality may be detected. Caroline Walker Bynum has offered a detailed historical tracking of the denial of organic process among (mostly male) theologians as they imagined the resurrection of the Christian body at the end of time. As Bynum (1995) shows, Christian thinkers repeatedly rejected the apostle Paul's claim that the dead body is like a seed that rots in the ground, preferring instead to imagine the corpse using non-organic metaphors of a broken vessel or crystal capable of being

reconstructed rather than having to undergo putrefaction. Death was therefore a problem for these men, "not because it was an event that ended consciousness, but because it was part of oozing, disgusting, uncontrollable biological process" (p. 113). When we consider the sheer longevity of such disavowals of human corruptibility, ranging from the third century through the fourteenth, we realize that we are encountering a way of thinking that seems to bridge conventional distinctions between ancient, medieval and modern. Indeed the recurrent association of female bodies with the organic process that so disturbed most male (and even some female) theologians reinforces impressions that certain forms of masculinity are indeed imagined as being "beyond process" and therefore transcendent in fantasmatic ways.

We see further evidence of such aspirations in modern science which, as Bruno Latour (1993, p. 10) points out, relies upon the ongoing work of "purification" that "creates two entirely distinct ontological zones; that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other." Purification thus elevates the (traditionally male) knower over matter which has been historically regarded as "feminine" insofar as it resembles the organic. Susan Bordo (1987) corroborates this idea in historical terms, pointing how Cartesianism sought to actualize a "dream of purity" through an epistemological transcendence of an implicitly feminized "organic cosmology." Such fantasies were not confined to the lofty realms of theoretical abstraction, for where Christian theologians saw in bodily resurrection a victory over putrefaction (Bynum 1995, p. 38) secular movements were afoot to maximize physical vitality and forestall change for as long as possible. This fantasy of partly transcending corporeality *through* corporeality is evident in the new forms of military discipline that emerged towards the end of the seventeenth century, wherein soldiers were expected to function with regularity and predictability (Forth 2008). We may also glimpse it in attempts to create (mostly) male bodies capable of laboring without fatigue that Anson Rabinbach (1990) has described in rich detail. These machinelike bodies would thus be pushed beyond ordinary human capacities so as to never grow tired or require much rest, a fantasy to some extent converted into the dreams of unlimited performance in twentieth-century athletics (Hoberman 1992). We also see them at work in the appeals to cleanliness and hygiene that gained momentum from the eighteenth century onward, focusing attention on the need to repel "filth" from the bodily peripheries as well as to monitor

the presence of filth within (Corbin 1988). Anxieties about dirt and decay, which were usually accompanied by intolerance for the odors that usually called them to mind – seemed to march in tandem with shrinking tolerance for death which accelerated its gradual retreat to the margins of social life and personal consciousness beginning roughly around the same time.

As is often the case, fantasies of masculine corporeal transcendence are directed toward the future with one eye looking back toward the past. Ana Carden-Coyne (2009) is thus no doubt correct that early twentieth century techniques and practices of bodily reconstruction reflected a broadly Western way of overcoming the physical and mental destruction wrought by the First World War. The ubiquitous use of neoclassical imagery in these developments represented a "cultural nostalgia," which Carden-Coyne describes as "partly a longing for, or an idealizing of, the past, and partly a need to make productive use of the past through cultural practices." These practices were framed through a "discourse of overcoming" that aimed not only at rehabilitation but also reimagining: classical nudes, yes, but also man-machine amalgams that projected an overcoming of the merely human. This is less a matter of "healing," which implies the restoration of a state of physical and psychological well-being prior to a crisis, than an attempt to make use of "crisis" in order to transcend all future crises, whether collective and nationalistic or personal and narcissistic. Thus classical imagery "envisioned the past, but also promised utopia with wholeness and beauty as antidotes to human suffering" (p. 111). Whether carved in the stone of war memorials or depicted in art and photography, "masculine beauty frozen in a timeless vortex offered the fantasy of eternal renewal, and the avoidance of death" (p. 155).

Thus Carden-Coyne's analysis resonates with Roger Griffin's in that both reveal the ways in which the past may be mobilized for the purposes of creatively imagining a bodily future in which the fragility of human being has been transcended. There is thus a continuity between many modernist forms of transcendence and that imagined by fascists. Although his examples are drawn from the early twentieth century fascination with fusions of men and machines, Klaus Theweleit's (1989) analysis of the fascist "man of steel" owes nothing to machine culture per se. Rather, fantasies of the "mechanized body as conservative Utopia derives instead from men's compulsion to subjugate and repulse what is specifically human within them" (p. 162). We may also

find evidence of it in contemporary body work that also distances itself from certain human shortcomings. As Sam Fussell (1991, p. 140) recalled in his bodybuilding memoir, "I hated the flawed, weak, vulnerable nature of being human," and conceded that his "attempt at physical perfection grew from seeds of self-disgust." Without going so far as to reduce fitness and exercise routines to quasi-fascistic fantasies of male transcendence (Klein 1993), it is fair to say that associations of the masculine with the transcendence of organic time does not respect neat historical divisions between the modern and premodern.

Writing of our modern attraction to machines, philosopher Michael Hauskeller (2013, p. 69) explains that "Living things rise and decline. They come into existence and go out of existence. That is why we wish for a form of existence that is not life, at least not life as we know it." The desire to change physical traits thus springs less from dissatisfaction with specific aspects of our bodies than "because we are unhappy with the body as such." Thus fantasies of transcending corporeality through corporeality are always doomed to fail and they remain the sources of the sense of crisis that is their inevitable consequence. Is there a distinctively "masculine" way in which this failure has been experienced? If so then perhaps so-called "crises of masculinity" may also be approached in terms of the fundamentally ambiguous nature of embodiment and the differently gendered ways in which modern men and women have sought to cope with it. If there is no stable period prior to the "crisis" in question perhaps it is partly because ambiguity cuts to the heart of embodiment as such. One might speculate that the striving for certain "masculine" ideals –and we might include "female masculinities" – represents particular ways of engaging with this basic ambiguity, which is always lived under specific social and historical circumstances. Thus if women in numerous cultures become, as Martha Nussbaum (2004, p. 113) puts it, "vehicles for the expression of male loathing of the physical and the potentially decaying," then male encounters with the physical and the decaying necessarily give rise to gendered tensions that are not so easily encapsulated within modernity or even within the West itself. Thus when it comes to the body perhaps "the masculine" is predicated on the presumed rights of males to name themselves as being "beyond process" while reducing the feminine and the feminized to process itself.

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The dynamics of displacement: diasporic masculinities and otherness in postcolonial modernity

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Abstract
In different historical and cultural contexts it is important to examine the ways in which diasporic and transnational relations are a key process of societal change, which may involve complex forms of dislocation and integration. Drawing on a qualitative research project on immigrant men in Portugal, we aim at disentangling the ways in which community identities are constructed in a gendered manner, with differences pertaining to the constitution of specific diasporic communities (Brazilians, Cape Verdeans and Mozambicans), hailing from diverse Portuguese colonial and post-colonial histories. We contend that for a deeper understanding of the overall consequences of migration and transnationalism, a gender perspective, which is often neglected when tackling cultural encounters and multiple modernities, is mandatory. For immigrant men, the experience of otherness, even if permeated by cultural entanglements, hibridity and social inclusion, is marked, in most cases, by subalternity. This subordinate condition, of being a discriminated stranger, a categorized other often experiencing feelings of frustration and disenchantment with the 'European dream', is reinforced by racialized/ethnic otherness vis-à-vis the dominance of whiteness. The ways of dealing with discrimination lead to the construction of identities, along national lines of origin, in a highly gendered form, namely in terms of masculinities. As a consequence, Portuguese and European men are strongly devaluated and viewed as feminine and emasculated. Simultaneously, Portuguese women tend to be perceived as strongly masculinized. Conversely, immigrant men tend to stress self-definitions of identity that give priority to a virile sexuality and bodily performances as a way to compensate for the lack of other capitals of masculinity (e.g. financial and public power). However, these strategies can be quite paradoxical. On the one hand, there is a reinforcement of a defensive communitarist sense of belonging that ultimately leads to ghettoization. On the other hand, there are also aspirational processes operating through the mimicry of the dominant other, even if these are often conflicting and contradictory. In sum, at the same time, immigrant men do aspire to power in many-sided ways (namely by reinventing multiple forms of male bodily performativity) and tend to shut themselves to inclusion in the dominant Portuguese gender order, frequently being complicit with their own fetichization as Other.

Men at the margins: subalternity and hegemony

The expansion of transnationalization processes (from capitalism to culture) has paved the way for new forms of building up masculinity to emerge in contemporary societies. Migration movements from the global South to the global North posed new challenges to men, in their individual lives, and to the gender order, as an institutional whole. Indeed, the rapid flow of bodies, information and imageries of manhood, which are rapidly dislocated from one social setting to another, have set difficult challenges to research about men and masculinities. These challenges must

necessarily lead us to reconsider the notion of hegemonic masculinity as well as the dynamics of power that sustain, still, the gendered hierarchy of some over the others, as Hearn (2009) has pointed out with the concept of transpatriarchies. For this reason, further advancing our reflection on how men in subordinate positions (re)construct their identities and practices by reference to the norm of masculine power, success, virility and whiteness (the key principles upholding hegemonic masculinity) is of paramount importance. By focusing on different groups of immigrant men living in contemporary Portugal we aim to contribute to the empirical knowledge of the 'subordinate' vis-à-vis the hegemonic and explore the ways in which ethnic community identities are constructed in a gendered manner by men who lived through processes of displacement. Additionally, we expect to examine the boundaries between subordinate and dominant and discuss the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the problems it has raised. From our perspective, the differentiation between subordination and domination is not as clear as it may seem and cannot be conceptualized outside a perspective that perceives the complexity of making the one into the other: the processes of otherness. On the other hand, the emphasis on otherness implies that we envisage masculinity as a complex structure of capitals mobilized in the permanent struggle for identity and some kind of supremacy, even one that works by reinventing the power of the subordinate. This power, though problematic and potentially ghettoized, can also contribute to change what hegemonic masculinity represents and, most importantly, it might lead us to question what the concept means. In sum, by looking at the margins it is perhaps easier to disentangle the imageries, and even symbolic contradictions, of the centre.

From the 1980's onwards, transnational masculinities have been widely debated (Connell 2005) and new concerns were raised. One important subject has been the transnational flows of men who migrate from one place to another, normally from poor southern countries to the comparatively much richer northern societies in search of a better life, many times to face hardship and even the shattering of the once cherished 'western dream'. Research focusing on migrant men has expanded and provided us with information on how marginalized and subordinated masculinities are compelled to change, at least to a certain degree, when men have to adjust to a

different gender order and quite often to a different conceptualization of what hegemonic masculinity is (e.g. Donaldson et al. 2009).

A valued masculinity can be many things and enacted in different ways. This array of different symbols associated with masculinity and with male power allows men to reconstruct their position as dominant subjects in very different ways, at least discursively. But power is also discourse, even if we must not forget the material basis of inequality. Poor immigrant men are not powerful if we define power in materialistic terms, but their global subordination does not inhibit them from aspiring to power, which they try to demonstrate and enact, particularly in relation to women but also to other men, through complex strategies (violence, for instance) and discourses.

The contemporary remaking of masculinities as a transnational process generates a perhaps more complex hegemony of men (e.g. Hodgson 2001, Ouzgane and Morrell 2005, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994, Howson 2009, Ong 1999). In a world shaken by massive changes in gender relations, men's lives and identities are shifting, thereby revealing, at the micro-level, the multiplicity (Eisenstadt 2000) and the entanglements of modernities (Therborn 2003). From the point of view of male power, in postcolonial Portugal immigrant men find themselves caught up between different 'worlds' of meaning. Gender relations are not immune to global change, but are evolving into hybrid forms of masculinities, rather than simply adapting to western ways, though the influence of the West is paramount.

In this sense, men and masculinities constitute an object and a perspective of research which implicates multiple levels of analysis and complex connections between them. As a result, it is worth developing the dialogue between material and discursive approaches to power, simultaneously avoiding either the reification of masculinity or its dissolution into an endless plethora of discourses. Although masculinities are multiple, and it is therefore reductionist to speak of men or masculinity as uniform categories, it would be an error to forget that men's power is structural and thus forms a consistent set of societal patterns at the same time as it is culturally shifting and individually embodied in flexible ways (e.g. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Hearn 2004). Advocating such a theoretical and methodological strategy implies keeping abreast of concepts such as patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity, yet without losing sight of domination as a process operating fluidly at

multiple levels and as ultimately constitutive of the subject (Foucault 1977). A discussion of Connell's definition of masculinities as hierarchically organized multiple configurations of practice forming a hegemony is paramount. However, if we place the processes of masculine domination at the centre of gender relations we still have to find theoretical tools to grasp domination as structure, discourse and agency-related. In this respect, Marx's notion of 'appropriation' may be of help, if we are able to go beyond a materially driven definition and extend the concept of appropriation to culture and symbolic goods as well as agency and embodiment. The process of incorporation (e.g. Bourdieu 1977) implies appropriation, and this appropriation is always a power-based process. Drawing upon Bhabha's (1994) work on appropriation and mimicry, Demetriou (2001), among others, has argued for masculinities – particularly hegemonic masculinity – to be conceived as appropriating traces of non-hegemonic masculinities. In this regard, masculinities are socially constituted through complex struggles for the acquisition and reallocation of certain symbols and material positions. The embodying and performing of gender, while linked to power differentials, implies processes of appropriation that must be viewed as dynamic and flexible. As a consequence, a reflection on power and hegemony must consider the hybrid character of masculinity. In their practices men permanently use various references, but not exactly through the most peaceful negotiations. Hegemonic masculinity is not just a symbol of domination over women and other forms of masculinity, but rather it is particularly dependent on tension within it. An additional difficulty emerges whenever we aim to trace out the main traits of hegemony. In other words, the main problem is perhaps to find a heuristic way of distinguishing between what is hegemonic and what is not.

Immigrant men in a postcolonial society

This paper focuses on the diasporic masculinities of immigrant men living in Portugal's capital city, Lisbon. This was part of a wider research project on non-dominant men and their identity strategies in dealing with subalternity and domination.[1] The selection of immigrant men, in a total of 45 in-depth interviews,

[1] The project Men at the Margins (2010-2013) was funded by the Portuguese Science Foundation.

sought to attain a wide diversity of colonial and postcolonial histories vis-à-vis the colonial centre.

The bulk of interviewees were Brazilians (20) who are, today, the larger migrant group in Portuguese society. Brazilian relations to the former colonial power are ambiguous, even if Brazil can be characterized as a European settler society (although with highly marked Black African and Native American demographic and cultural strands). On the one hand, Brazil's independence was attained quite early on, in 1822 in the context of the South American liberations of the early 1800s. From the onset of independence, Brazil became a recipient society of Portuguese migrants. As a result, Portuguese migrants, and by contagion Portugal, were seen depreciatively. Of course, the downgrading of Portuguese whiteness developed within the complex racial classifications of Brazilian society. Even if the official rhetoric depicts it as a racial democracy, Brazil still presents a system of hierarchical categories of race and colour, whose apex remains whiteness to the detriment of Black or Native American admixtures. On the other hand, in the last few decades, Portugal became increasingly seen as a rich Western European country, and whose culture was perceived by Brazilians as similar to their own – not only linguistically, but also regarding sociability.

The two other groups represent a very different colonial background – the late Portuguese colonialism in Africa – and exemplify, at each pole of the spectrum, opposite colonization strategies. Both Mozambique and Cape Verde only attained independence in 1975, after a long war. However, Mozambique was a strongly racial one: not only the legal difference between 'Blacks' and 'Whites' was paramount, but also native populations were constrained to forced labour. From 1961 onwards European settling highly increased. The preponderant colonial system was basically akin to *apartheid*, enhanced by the proximity of South Africa and the importance of British economic interests in Mozambique. Quite differently, the colonial strategy followed by the Portuguese state produced a mixed society, resulting from the mingling of Portuguese settlers and of dislocated Black Africans (the islands of Cape Verde were uninhabited before Portuguese discovery). This creolization process impacted on racial identities and categories as, overall, Cape Verdeans do not perceive themselves as 'Black' but as mixed (*Mestiços*). Both Mozambicans (15 interviews) and Cape Verdeans (10 interviews) started migrating to Portugal from 1975 onwards.

The receiver society for these different immigrants, Portugal, could be characterized as a backwards society until the changes brought forth by the revolution in 1974, which put an end to dive decades of an authoritarian, conservative and colonialist dictatorship. Although Portuguese colonial practices were highly racist, official discourse denied it, praising the supposed Portuguese lack of racial discrimination and soft and integrative colonialism. Notwithstanding, Portuguese culture and society is pervaded by racial categorizations. At present, a systematic 'subtle racism' prevails, even if official discourse and the legal framework are straightforwardly anti-racist. Likewise, until the mid-seventies, official and legal discourses in Portugal enforced a strongly asymmetrical gender order of masculine domination. This is now profoundly changed. Not only Portuguese democracy enacted absolute formal equality between men and women and developed anti-conservative gender equality policy measures in a wide number of fields, but also, siding with the sharp decrease of Catholicism, profound changes, ranging from female paid labour (one of the highest in the world, namely full-time) to the dissemination of individualized life-styles or LGBT rights, have paved the way to a more symmetrical gender order.

When dealing with these groups of immigrant men we were concerned with a number of analytical problems. Namely, how to apply conceptual categories such as hegemonic and subordinate to the analysis of non-hegemonic or discriminated men and masculinities? And how to combine material and discursive approaches to power without neglecting the agency of the subordinate? As a tactic, we focused on the aspirations of these immigrant men to be/become/have the absent 'capitals' of manhood, analysing the different strategies and discourses for self-empowerment when dealing with otherness, scrutinizing rebellion and protest as a way to escape subjection, but also looking at complicit and contradictory modalities of masculinity and community identities.

Diasporic masculinities and the dialectics of otherness

Our main findings reveal that these three groups of immigrant men have quite different forms of dealing with displacement, though a number of commonalities could be identified. All of them are engaged in what we can define as the dialectics of

otherness. In brief, they are the Other but at the same time that fetichized otherness (Ahmed 2000) becomes a complex process in which immigrant men also transform Portuguese and Portuguese and European men (as well as women) into 'others'. Otherness is sedimented as a form of mutual recognition, which permits to the subordinate a gain in terms of identity as they use a number of strategies for disempowering the dominant. Even if immigrant men mimic western ways (Portuguese but mainly the westernized imageries of masculinity) they all feel the need to empower themselves by recreating difference. A difference mainly constructed through the body and sexuality as a sort of weapon of true manhood that is denied to Portuguese and Europeans, in general. The latter are generally emasculated and their constant feminization (as weak and dominated by more powerful and undesirable women) clearly shows the extent to which the feminine is still a strong weapon of devaluation. For Mozambicans, Portuguese men are '*men in a bottle*' (subordinated to women), for Cape Verdeans they are weak, for Brazilians they are sexually powerless and unfit to conquer women. At the same time, also as a commonality, the Portuguese weak or even gayish men are the dominated partners of masculinised women, who behave like men, are sexually unattractive, have too much body hair, and are to avoid in stereotypical terms.

In spite of these common strategies, the difficulties in dealing with *racialized* discrimination are dealt with in different ways, which are clearly underpinned by the history of colonial inheritances and ambivalent views of Portugal as a European nation that was the old colonizer. In other words, the forms of dealing with the supremacy of whitened are different for historical reasons. Brazilians strive to hide their racial features (when they are obviously not in conformity with the body of a white man). Cape Verdeans, who often consider themselves as "the whites of Africa" tend to demonstrate ambiguous feelings when ambiguously discovering blackness in the Portuguese context. Mozambicans, who were already aware of their blackness, feel, in spite of this, the reiteration of blackness beyond their expectations. In a way, the old fallacy of luso-tropicalism whereby the Portuguese would be softer, less racist and more open to stereotypical tropicalist bodily performativities is shattered and substituted by the cold reality of the facts. Then, as Portuguese become colder and whiter, immigrant men, discovering a stronger otherness than ever imagined, end up

by falling in this dialectics of otherness and resort to difference to regain some power. Even if there are a number of ways of reconstructing masculinity and many-sided othernesses, subordination has to be dealt with.

The commodification of masculinity in the post-colonial context

Our empirical world led us to reflect upon what some authors have labelled the commodification of masculinity, paying special attention to the ways in which men's discourses point to the struggles between domination and subjection. One striking fact is that by referring to commodification, we are reproducing the ways in which men organize their discourses and practices, always awarding a certain value to a certain good (material or symbolic), which mimics, to some extent, the capitalist dynamics of economic exchange. A number of symbols are appropriated by men and used performatively to enact masculinity and avoid a feeling of complete exclusion. In a way, and following Baudrillard's (1996) reasoning on the 'object value system', signs and symbols can be exchanged as commodities insofar as meaning (which can equal value in a Marxian sense) is created through difference.

Men empower themselves in multiple ways and using a wide number of categories that range from those embedded in custom to those linked to western imageries of masculinity. By using their bodies as if these were 'capitals' of manhood men reflexively trade their bodily abilities (from violence to sexuality) in a sort of market of goods, in which the body and sexuality are seen as opposed to money or other forms of institutional power. This allows marginalized men to achieve a feeling that they can be valued men without having money or any other form of materially based power. As a result, white men are emasculated insofar as they are considered less virile and softened. They become others in a complex game of otherness, in which there seems to be, at a first glance, little coherence in discourses about masculinity.

These processes can be reconstructed through the categories men use to describe themselves and others. However, all of these 'labels' represent the entanglement of different symbolic categories – those of the countries of origin, those of colonial discourses, those of contemporary Portugal – with global imageries and many examples could be given. Most of these labels represent a kind of rebellion against the power held by others, but simultaneously they also reveal a will of not

being left out of what is hegemonic in terms of masculinity. Therefore alternative and even marketized forms of building up masculinity are only partially rebellious insofar as they do not really contribute to the emancipation of women and comply with patriarchy, at least in the majority of cases.

However, more important than presenting a list of local and global imageries, which could result in the description of a number of types of masculinity, is to grasp the processes that underlie the use of such discursive categories, which ultimately contribute to maintain the hegemony of men (Hearn 2004). In this train of thought, there are three key processes that must be taken into account when analysing diasporic masculinties: aspiration, mimicry and disenchantment. Men aspire to emancipation and to their share of hegemony (e.g. Howson 2009), which they so often see as unattainable. In an attempt to escape subordination, mimicry plays a key role insofar as strong entanglements between different symbols are constructed in a way that generates new categories and also new forms of enacting masculinity. But there is also a degree of disenchantment produced by frustration and a feeling of unattainability. This is quite obvious when we analyse the ways in which men play with the categories of otherness. And, this is also blatant when we take into account the feeling of exclusion that affects a great fraction of male immigrants, who see themselves deprived of the material and symbolic 'goods' that would grant them a powerful masculinity. In a way, disenchantment is deeply tied with the awareness of being alienated and deprived of recognition and redistribution (Honeth and Fraser 2003).

Finally, a central conclusion is related to the importance of transnational capitalism in reproducing power and inequality. But, more than just a material mode of production, capitalism – and the marketized dircursivity that it upholds – appears almost as an 'ontological' reality that, in a strong way, implies tying together the symbolic and the discursive with the material groundings that support still a patriarchal gender order, or in better words, the continuity of patriarchy. The idea of masculinity as a capital can only be understood in this way, which is, of course, highly indebted to Marx's theorization of value and the many developments that followed. For now, the important aspect to retain is that the notion of capital can both include and weave together the discursive and the material. The marketized semantics of

masculinities at the margins is, in this sense, closely linked to the hegemony of men, which implies different but effective strategies of appropriation, through sophisticated forms of competition, of socially produced value, whether material or symbolic.

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The role of gender in online dating profiles: empirical evidence from the Portuguese context

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Abstract
The aim of this research is to study the role gender plays in the construction of Portuguese online dating profiles. How do daters use their self-presentation messages and profile pictures in their quest to find a match? 200 personal ads and 1006 photographs of men and women profiles were analyzed following a qualitative methodology. Findings reveal that, by means of a selective self-presentation, masculine and feminine members try to please and attract potential partners. Men emphasize their rational and practical attributes and their professional and economic status, whereas women value their emotional and affective facets, and their inclination to dream. Women also emphasize their physical attributes more than men. Although it is possible to detect certain clues pointing toward modern gender roles, data suggests that gender stereotypes persist.

Keywords: Gender, Online dating, Self-presentation, Portugal

Theoretical and conceptual framework

This paper is part of a research that explores societal implications of the Internet and social networking in romantic life, specifically, the role of the Internet in introducing couples that meet in person and the formation of romantic relationships in the digital age. In particular, this paper addresses the role of gender in Portuguese online dating profiles. The aim is to contribute with empirical knowledge about the gender dynamics characterizing the process and the strategies followed by Portuguese men and women in their self-presentations on a dating site.

Cyber romance, online dating, online love, Internet dating, or whatever the expression used, has gradually become an important and increasingly enthusiastic field of research in the social sciences domain and "should no longer be treated as an exotic fringe phenomenon" (Döring, 2002, p. 333). There is a growing body of literature in Communication Studies, Psychology and, more recently, in Sociology, about multiple research topics including but not limited to: the factors that lead to online dating (Kang and Hoffman, 2011); the process of relationship formation and the establishment of intimacy (Jiang et al., 2011); mate preferences (Hitsch et al., 2005); self-presentation and self-disclosure (Hogan, 2010; Green et al., 2006); the transition from online to

offline relationships (Taylor et al., 2010); deception, authenticity and lies (Zillmann et al., 2011); and gender differences in online dating (Morgan et al., 2010).

Past studies have mainly been concerned with the textual parts of online dating profiles, namely, the information gathered from the user's completed questionnaire (demographic information, personality and physical traits, interests and desired characteristics of the ideal partner – material used by the dating sites in the matching process) and the self-presentation messages (advertisements) daters write on their profile page. However, images and photographs uploaded by daters on their profiles have progressively been used as a data source by researches and, not surprisingly, studies including visual analysis are starting to flourish (Humphreys, 2006; Siibak, 2010).

Looking for love online

Tough some have name it "artificial partner-seeking" (Geser 2007), the truth is that, artificial or not, partner matching platforms have become during the last decade, notably in the Western countries and particularly in the USA, a privileged place to find sexual and/or romantic partners. The Internet – chat rooms, virtual communities, social networking websites, online dating sites and other online spaces – has "partly displaced not only family and school, but also neighborhood, friends, and the workplace as venues for meeting partners" (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012, p. 523). A recent study from *The Pew Research Center*, found that 74% of singles say they use Internet for romantic interests and 43% of those reach to a face-to-face date (Madden and Lenhart, 2006).

The increase in years of schooling and hence the tendency for a later entry into marital life can lead to a spouse searching taking place in later ages, when formal education has already ended. This facts, allied to the ubiquity of the Internet – one can be online, on multiple devices, almost anywhere and anytime – may contribute for the peoples' willing to look for love online.

As Gibbs et al. (2006) argue, "although earlier incarnations of the mediated matchmaking service, such as newspaper personal ads and video dating, have been the subject of previous academic research (…), this new iteration of Internet-facilitated matchmaking is unique because of its broader user base and the substantively

different capabilities available to users" (p. 153), i.e. search thousands of personal ads; scrutiny according to personal preferences; privacy and confidentiality; and selective self-presentation.

Self-presentations in dating sites

Presenting ourselves to the world is a complex process (Goffman, 1959) and communication technologies have complicated it further. Online or offline, all subjects construct their identity and try to convey some images about themselves. By facing self-presentation as a performance, Fiore (2008) underlines that "everything from the user name (or 'handle') to the use of language or the choice of a photograph can signal certain qualities in online interaction; some signals 'give' intended meaning while simultaneously 'giving off' further unintended information" (p. 2).

The way social actors create and re-create their identities, (re)constructing their inner selves in contemporary life, has been a subject of wide interest to multiple researchers (Giddens, 1991; Lahire, 2005). The (re)creation of an identity on virtual environments, namely on dating sites, and the way men and women present themselves to potential romantic partners, has also been extensively studied (Bargh et al., 2002; Hancock and Toma, 2009; Turkle, 1995).

Occasionally, in order to attract others, daters lie about themselves. But literature indicates that deviations tend to be ubiquitous though small in magnitude (Toma et al., 2008). The process of self-presentation may resemble a mosaic construction: knotty, slow and sometimes puzzling. On the online environment self-presentation can be seen as a procedure that mixtures actual self, ideal self and ought self. That is not necessarily bad, once these "possible selves" (Markus and Nurius, 1986), may act as an important element of one's self-knowledge: "self-construction is a primary motivation of self-presentation. Often people enact self-presentation behavior to 'create, maintain, or modify' an image that reflects one's ideal self". (Baumeister, *apud*, Gonzales and Hancock, 2008, pp. 167-168).

Gender differences in profile ads

The content of the ads reflect the attributes deemed most valuable in a given geographical and temporal context. Thus, they constitute an interesting and appealing

source of information about personal and preferred partner characteristics, mating strategies, impression management, personal relationships, gender stereotypes, and gender differences as well.

Literature concerning personal advertisements indicates that gender stereotypes influence the way men and women describe the ideal partner and also the way they define themselves in order to attract potential mates. Though what men and women want and offer may differ by partner choice and sexual orientation, heterosexual men are more likely to offer physical descriptors and instrumental traits (education, career, financial status), and to request expressive qualities in women; while heterosexual women personal profiles more often offer physical attractiveness and expressive features and request for instrumental traits in males (Jagger, 2001).

A substantial body of literature supports the idea that men and women ads complement each other. However, there are studies challenging this assumption with ambiguous results. Men may also be looking for financially independent, successful and ambitious women, whereas women, relative to the opposite sex, are starting to emphasize commitment, communication and the ability to express feelings (Strassberg and Holty, 2003).

Research questions and methodology

To accomplish the main goal of this study, two research questions were posed:

- RQ1: Regarding the texts presenting online daters: what are the personal attributes that men and women stress most about themselves?
- RQ2: Regarding the photographs uploaded in the profiles: how do men and women portray themselves?

The sample was composed by 200 profiles (100 ♂ and 100 ♀) and 1006 photographs (485 of ♂ and 521 of ♀), collected at meetic.pt dating site. Profiles were selected according to the following criteria: have a photograph and an ad; range from 25 to 60 years old; live in Portugal; live in Lisbon; live in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon. For the rest (e.g. education, income, physical appearance, etc.) it was preserved the random effect.

Profiles in the dating site studied, include: a self-presentation message; a space to upload photographs; a closed-ended questionnaire about personal data, traits and

tastes, habits, profession, income, partner-preference, etc.; and a questionnaire with pre-defined yes/no questions selected by the users. Only the first two items were studied.

Data was analyzed following a qualitative methodology: thematic content analysis; semi-inductive approach; in-depth scrutiny; and treating the visual as problematic (Bardin, 2007; Bell, 2001).

Results

Partners form initial impressions of each other from online dating profiles. Therefore, drawing up a profile, as the results confirm, is not arbitrary. Self-presentation follows rational choices in what concerns written ads and chosen images. Daters try to present themselves as acceptable people to others in an attempt to please and attract them. Hence, they seek to bring out attributes and characteristics considered (by themselves and/or possibly by others) as the most valuable. Online dating sites seem to be a stage where human interactions function as a theatrical performance.

Presentation messages

RQ1. What are the personal attributes that men and women stress most about themselves?

Content analysis to the written ads reveals four different types of self-presentation messages: psychological and physical descriptions about oneself; psychological and physical descriptions about oneself and preferred attributes in the partner; preferred attributes in the partner; poems, famous quotes and lyrics.

The focus in self-presentation messages is on two main categories: psychological aspects, relational and behavioural characteristics of oneself, and the subject's favourite activities.

Regarding the first category both men and women present themselves as being honest, intelligent, sociable, outgoing, cheerful, easy-going, affable, generous and special. However, only men describe themselves as being mature, rational, responsible, ambitious and perseverant. By contrast, only women characterize themselves as selfless, maternal, feminine, soft, romantic and, most of all, dreamy.

In what regards user's favourite activities, no big differences were found between sexes. Both women and men like to travel, go to the cinema, listen to music, going to concerts and to the beach, appreciate nature, the sea, the sun, the moon and the stars, being with the family, read, write, laugh, have a drink, cook, be with friends, practice sports, dance, and shopping. Nonetheless, only men referred they liked to date, kiss and eat sushi, whereas women were the only who wrote on their profile ads they liked to read poetry, taste exotic food and eat chocolate and sweets.

Images

RQ.2 How do men and women portray themselves?

The content analysis to the photographs uploaded by men and women, allowed to interpret how Portuguese online daters portray themselves in their dating profiles. Three diverse categories emerged from this analysis: 1) the physical - photos relating to the body (body fit, body look, body presentation); 2) the symbolic - images that suggest or represent ideas, qualities, tastes, emotions and states of mind or spirit; and 3) the material - photos showing or pointing to physical objects, money or possessions (the material world). For each category similarities and differences between men's and women's profiles were studied and results summarized in the tables bellow.

Table 1.
The physical category - Photos relating to the body

Similarities	Differences
▪ Various poses and behaviors ▪ **pictures show physically fit bodies** ▪ Glamour photographs (marriages, baptisms, special/party events) ▪ Flattering angles, wearing fancy, expensive, clothes and accessories	▪ ♀ appear in 96.5% of the photos ▪ ♂ appear in 85% of the photos ▪ ♀ **reveal far more physical details than** ♂ **emphasizing their physical attributes** ▪ ♀ **show particular parts of their body**: lips, legs, tongue and navel piercings, feet, and tattoos (shoulder, wrist, nape of the neck, chest, lower back, hip, and ankle)

Table 2.
The symbolic category – Photos suggesting ideas, qualities, emotions, etc.

Similarities	Differences
▪ ♀ **and** ♂ **upload symbolic photographs** : sunsets, beautiful landscapes, restaurants, pets, or fine art photography	▪ **Only** ♂ **upload photographs of their workplace**: working as architects, civil engineers, aircraft pilots, policemen or firemen, business men or sitting at the computer, amid papers and files.

Table 3.
The material category – Photos presenting physical objects, money or possessions.

Similarities	Differences
▪ **No (apparent) similarities…** … but there are indirect ways of showing socioeconomic statu, i.e. well treated and cared bodies, wearing fancy and expensive, clothes, accessories and make up	▪ **The most explicit gender difference is found in this category** ▪ ♂ upload far more photographs than ♀in what relates this category (cars, motorbikes, boats, houses, capital cities visited, paradisiacal beaches, desert landscapes, ski resorts)

Conclusions

Data gathered, analyzed and interpreted in this study seems to *corroborate and extend previous findings,* providing compelling evidence that also Portuguese men and women pursue distinct strategies to attract others online. Gender produces differences in personal and preferred partner attributes outlined in profiles. Online dating profiles fit with what is considered socially acceptable in the dominant culture. Thus, men's and women's self-presentations generate significant material contributing to address concerns with the theoretical interpretation of continuity and social and cultural change (innovation and tradition) in what gender roles are concerned.

Daters tend to offer complementary gender-based characteristics and to present identities rooted in traditional hegemonic ideas about gender. Male daters reinforce the instrumental role while female daters stress the expressive role (tradition). Moreover, women, reinforce the feminine stereotype associated to the female body (eroticism) by posting more detailed photographs of their bodies and exploiting their erotic capital (Hakim, 2010). In the Portuguese context, the association of women to the world of reproduction and of men to the world of production has not been completely fractured, and important traits of conventional gender relations still persist (Aboim, 2010).

Nonetheless, it is also possible to detect certain clues pointing toward contemporary forms of gender relations (innovation). Some men describe their emotional and relationship skills, by stating, for instance, their affable and caring facets, revealing thus their "orientation towards a sense of belonging and intimacy" (Torres, 2011), and being appreciated for that by women. On their turn, women, though a minority, offer and are valued for their active, independent and self-

confident traits, and also characteristics of professional success, dynamic and proactive attributes. In sum, research may be pointing to a "gender-specific decline in mate value" (Skopek, et al, 2011, p. 267).

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Gender and individual life courses. Between reproduction and defiance

Diana Maciel

Abstract
This communication aims to look at the preliminary results of my PhD thesis, supervised by Professor Anália Torres, which aims to understand the way in which an individual develops and experiences her or his life course in a heteronormative and patriarchal society and the ways in which gender shapes this process. This research is underpinned by an understanding of gender in which the individual is considered as an active agente (West e Zimmerman, 1987 e 2009; Butler, 1990), without however neglecting the constraining effects of social structures (Connell, 2009; Martin, 2003; Messner, 2000). Thus, and to understand the influence of gender on the life course, not only in terms of decisions and actions but also in terms of opportunities, resources and constraints that are structurally assigned to the gendered individual, I am conducting biographical interviews with men and women , from 30 to 60 years old, living in couple. Although the research is still in the final stages of interviews and in the preliminary stages of analysis, there are already some trends, heavily influenced by individuals' social position and situation. There are individuals, men and women, who conduct their lives with an agency that reproduces gender representations, norms and practices that were internalized throughout the life course. There are other individuals guided by an agency that challenges or disrupts the gender representations, norms and practices in which they have lived and interacted. Finally, there are individuals with a life course marked by individual actions, rituals and social practices that are just pragmatic, not always conscious and reflective, acting without questioning gender representations, practices and norms internalized throughout the life course.

"Gender in the individual perspective: agency, constraints, resources and opportunities" is a PhD research in progress that aims to understand the way in which an individual develops and experiences her or his life course in a patriarchal and heteronormative society and the ways in which gender shapes this process. The research intends to understand the influence of gender on individual decisions and actions, but also opportunities, resources and constraints that are structurally assigned to gendered individuals.

It is known that women "marry and have (less) children increasingly later. (...) The risk of poverty is higher for them as well as the material rate of deprivation. (...) Most of them are in the secondary and higher education. (...) They are part of the labor market, but have higher unemployment rates. And they remain the key players in the provision of care" (INE, 2012, p. 3).

This quote demonstrates that gender is not just something that is done, undone or redone in everyday interaction[2]. It also reflects the unequal power relations between groups of gendered people.

This brings us back to the research which seeks to understand how this structural feature of gender intertwines with the ability of the individual to exercise agency[3]. In other words, it aims to understand the influence that gender has on the individual life course and the extent to which gender, closely related to the individual's position in terms of social class, allows the exercise of individual agency.

Theoretical considerations

This research is underpinned by an understanding of gender in which the individual is considered as an active agent (West et al., 1987; Butler, 1990, 1993), without neglecting the constraints, resources and structural opportunities a society offers to the exercise of that agency under the gender condition (Connell, 2009; Martin, 2003; Messner, 2000).

West and Zimmerman (op. cit.) argue that gender is something that is continually done in social interactions, taking into account the prevailing normative conceptions. The individual can act accordingly or as a form of resistance to gender representations, social norms and expectations. This *doing gender* is assessed and evaluated by others, therefore the individual is held accountable. This thesis was crucial for the development of a new analysis of agency, intention and consciousness in gender.

Butler (1990, 1993) perceives gender as performative. Gender is a continuous process and not something finished at some point of the individual life. It's continually being performed in a close relationship with a set of normative conceptions of gender. The performance of gender "(...) it is always a reiteration of a norm or a set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (Butler, 1993, p. 12). Therefore

[2] To further the discussion around the concepts of doing, undoing and redoing gender, read such authors as West et al. (1987), Butler (1990, 1993), Deutsch (2007), and the *Gender and Society Symposium* on the article "Doing gender" (2009).

[3] Agency is considered, in this research, as any conscious and reflexive action, in a temporal context in which the individual can act otherwise (Giddens, 2000). It varies according to historical and geographical context, but also according to the social positions occupied by the individual. This social action is capable of both challenging and reproducing practices, norms and representations.

a gender performance is not perceived by Butler as a choice, and even less as an equal choice, due to the power of social structures in the production of a specific discursive power. A number of social stigma and punishment prevents individuals from transgression in relation to the dominant gender discourse.

However, both these approaches tend to exaggerate the degree in which individuals are willing to endure in some structural contexts. In the analysis of gender and its influence on the day-to-day life and the construction of a life course, it's essential to include both agency and social structure. Without this balance, emphasis on agency undervalues the role of power in shaping social relations.

Authors such as Martin (2003) and Risman (2004) develop a theoretical approach that allows an understanding of the structural constraints present in individual's lives, but also the individual's inner consciousness which allows them to challenge and change gender structures. According to them, every society is composed by individuals who collectively form a structure. This structure has a set of gender standards and practices that are internalized by individuals who, in their actions, reproduce or reinvent them. However, the power of reproduction or reinvention differs from individual to individual, depending on the social situation in which they are or the social position they occupy. Social structure, while a background that contextualizes everyday life, influences social action differently, according to the power held by the individual.

The present research follows an approach that conceptualizes gender as a multidimensional phenomenon. To understand its relevance it's important to consider the relations between the structural, symbolic and interactional levels. This position is defended by authors such as Connell (2009), Messner (2000) and Kimmel (2000), who argue that to understand gender and the conditions under which gender is activated as a relevant organizing principle in social life it's important and desirable to explore the inter-relations, continuities and contradictions between various levels.

Method

In order to understand whether (and how) gender is constituted as an organizing principle relevant to individual life, the research is based on biographical interviews, in which individuals are perceived as "knowledgeable and active subjects

who attempt to overcome their alienation, to act upon the world themselves instead of being acted upon by others" (Jackson and Scott, 2002, p. 427), without, however, neglecting the importance of social structures in those capabilities.

It is intended, with this methodological decision, to get an individual reconstruction of past events and life trajectories, through a retrospective analysis, as well as social representations.

The interviews are composed by three parts. A first one aims to understand the individual biography. A second one has the goal to discover the way in which the individual perceives and manages various dimensions of everyday life (marriage, parenthood, work, religion and politics). And a third one tries to understand gendered representations, practices and life experiences.

Until now, 43 biographical interviews were conducted, 24 women and 19 men, from 30 to 60 years old, with various social backgrounds.

Agency in the individual perspective: Some results

Although the research is still in progress, it is possible already to make some considerations. A first observation is that there is a close relation between the way in which the individual perceives gender and the position he or she occupies in the social structure. I.e., the individual positioning in family, social, cultural, historical and geographical context influences not only the way in which the individual perceives his or her gender condition, but also the way in which he or she sees his or her agential ability. This is because this placement defines the power held by the individual in relation to gender condition and practices. Greater the power more vague are the boundaries or barriers to action. This diminishes accountability, stigmatization and punishment for transgressive actions.

A second observation is that there are two different types of agency: an agency that challenges gender norms, practices and representations and an agency that reproduces those standards, practices and representations. However, it is important to note that, by showing these two types of agency, it is not intended to put the individual in categories. Individuals and their perceptions and practices are complex and multiple. That is, the same individual may develop an agency of reproduction in a context and of defiance in another. Or an individual may develop an agency of

defiance in a certain life stage and of reproduction in another. Even within each agency there are a variety of nuances and contours that each one can take depending on the individual, his or her social position, the perception of that position and gender condition.

Agency that defies gender standards, practices and representations

Agency of defiance is a conscious and reflexive social action undertaken by the individual in the sense of not acting in accordance with social and cultural expectations. It's an action that breaks gender rules, practices and/or representations. However, these forms of undoing or redoing gender are evaluated and categorized by others, as advocated by West and Zimmerman and Butler. I.e. the individual is accountable and faces potential punishment and stigmatization. Therefore, this type of agency tends to involve some degree of distress and pain, again being very important the individuals' social positioning and his or her power in the interaction, as advocated by Risman and Martin.

Leonardo is a 41 years old architect. He was born and raised in a rural and traditional social context in what concerns to gender norms and practices. He tells that he always thought he acted naturally in his social interactions. However, he was always perceived as different, not corresponding to the local gender expectations.

"This region was a region that by being a little rural at the time, men were supposed to be ugly, dirty and bad and I was a guy more polite and delicate."

Because of this performance of gender perceived as failed, Leonardo was stigmatized and punished. Initially this punishment was through mockery, but later he was sexually assaulted by a group of older boys. This situation led him to live a lonely and reflective adolescence.

"That pressure of being constantly mocked affected me and left a mark on me. I was always on a struggle to prove to someone that I was capable, that I wasn't what they called me. Sometimes I lived trying to prove to others (...) that there was a place in the world for me."

Even his parents, with little formal education, often established very negative and critical comparisons between him and his brother, who was the embodiment of

hegemonic masculinity. His brother is ten years older, described as an active and dynamic person, with a very successful professional life.

Currently, Leonardo continues to act as he always did in his interactions and social relations. However, given the social and cultural transformations that occurred in the meantime, he is no longer openly criticized or socially punished for his performance of gender. It is also important to stress that, nowadays, he lives a heterosexual relationship and has a stable career, which can also have an impact in the way others perceive him.

Carolina is also an example of social action that defies gender regime, but with very different nuances. She is 34 years old and is currently out of work. She was, for some years, a sociologist in the area of gender equality.

She defines all her life as being in constant disruption with her parents. Bearing in mind that their expectations for her were

"to get a degree, to find a good job, to get pregnant only after marriage and to have a family",

She went against much of this plan. She went to college but only rarely attended classes. She graduated, but with little effort and commitment. She lived with her boyfriend in a residential for students. She worked as an assistant researcher and as a university professor, but one day she decided to quit. Four days later, she found that she was pregnant, and this would change her way of perceiving gender and the relation between family and work. She states that during the time she worked in gender equality, she thought that to be a woman

"was to be like a man."

She even says that she didn't menstruate for four years, because of

"a denial of femininity".

However, according to her, femininity reached its highest point with motherhood. Nowadays she finds it difficult to define herself as an individual without being

"as a mother".

This makes her to want to be with her son 24/7 and that causes her problems, because no one agrees with it.

"I live in a country and in a context in which I can't. Just with much pain. It is not possible! No one accepts."

However, the reasons why others don't agree with her revolve around the participation in the labor market, and she advocates the abolition of work. Therefore she feels very isolated in her decisions and choices concerning her lifestyle, and fears seeking advice from others. As she is not yet completely secure of her ideological position, she fears to hesitate and to be pushed into making decisions according to a model that she does not believe in.

When agency is exercised by the individual in order to defy the gender order and/or the gender regime in a way that is in line with the direction of social change but in contexts where it is not expected, a woman may feel a sense of limitation in exercising agency, but this does not put her gender condition and the way in which it is lived into question. However, Carolinas' type of agency equates to a return to gender essentialism and that leads to isolation and anguish.

Clarisse is a 39 years old family therapist. Growing up, she lived in a very difficult and conflicting family environment, due to her *"old-fashioned"* father. However, she found ways to overcome this situation early on.

"I was always the outsider (...) The more anyone tries to control me, the more I run away".

This is because, for her, freedom and free will are highly valued. This seems to be the result of everything she witnessed during her childhood and adolescence. Her mother had no power or freedom of choice and her father had all the power to decide about himself, his wife and the children. Her mother lived in a society

"where women had very little value and internalized it and I don't. I think I have as much value as my husband does."

This experience of female submission to male domination in everyday life leads to an individual action that intentionally defies her father's traditional and patriarchal views and practices. Thus, Clarisse challenges the heteronormative and symbolically asymmetric gender order, and feels no need to perform in the way in which femininity is socially and culturally expected to. Therefore, in her group of close friends, she tries to undo gender, but her behavior is automatically recategorized. Her friends allow her more freedom in the performance of femininity, but call her by the name of John.

Because of all she lived and witnessed, but also because of her will to not conform to social and cultural expectations around femininity, she has always felt

somehow limited for being a woman. And that's why she says she would like to be a man, because, in her opinion, to be a man is

"to be free and independent".

In the case of these interviews, to act in a way that defies gender standards, expectations and practices involves a reflective awareness of the individual placement in social reality, in gender terms. This reflective awareness can be more or less painful.

Agency that reproduces gender standards, practices and representations

Agency that reproduces gender norms and practices is a reflexive social action in which the individual decides to act in accordance with social and cultural standards and expectations. Despite the fact that the individual, in its actions, is reproducing standards and expectations; it doesn't necessarily imply that he or she acts unconsciously. However, once again it is essential to emphasize that the power of reinvention depends on the individual and its social position. The greater the structural constraining powers, the lower the possibility of creativity in individual action.

Nelson is a 35 years old administrative assistant with the 12th grade. He grew up in a *"confrontational"* and *"dysfunctional"* family environment. His father was a very intermittent father figure, with serious alcohol problems, and his mother was often absent due to work, and with great emotional and psychological problems.

This led him to develop a feeling of being stigmatized and restricted by the family that he was born in, where there was nothing he could do to avoid the fate that has been *"given"* to him. Especially because his parents never gave him the feeling of unconditional support and love, which, according to him, makes a person more confident and able to take a risk. That would enable him to balance the constraints and limits that society imposes.

He feels that he is really not able to correspond 100% to the prevailing notion of hegemonic masculinity, but he maintains a reflective awareness about this expectation. He tries to achieve the ideal and has never even thought about questioning or challenging it. And when he feels inadequate in the face of particular gender expectations, he blames society and his family history.

The constraints and limitations felt by him do not correspond to the view reported by Clarisse, for whom to be a man is to "be free". For him, on the contrary, there is a sense of being tied to a *"fate"* that was socially defined.

The following example is a testimony of someone who lives gender in a more peaceful way, though not entirely. Carla is a 40 years old physiotherapy assistant with the 11th grade.

She and her mother share several similarities in their life courses. In spite of the interviewee's upward social mobility, in terms of educational attainment, both her and her mother work in professions of care, related with health services. In addition, both of them left their parents' home in order to get married in the Catholic Church. Religion plays a major role in the lives of both mother and daughter.

There is only one point in which Carla did not meet the gender expectations of the rural, traditional and religious context where she was born, grew up and lives in: motherhood. However, this fact does not result from a conscious and reflective action. It was rather a matter of physical impossibility. Because of this, she experienced several years of anguish and sadness, had to deal with the comments of her neighbors and acquaintances, and developed a deep reflection on the role of women in society. Now, she has a more flexible view, in comparison to a gender regime that equates being a woman with being a mother:

> *"I feel very much a woman. (...) For me, being a woman means to be fulfilled, professionally, as a person and as my husband's wife. (...) I'm sure I am a woman without being a mother."*

However, despite this more flexible gender representation, she does not intend to defy the local gender regime. While she thinks of female gender as being multidimensional, her actions and her life course reproduce, whenever possible, features that are advocated and expected from women.

Final remarks

In conclusion, since the research is still in progress, it's only relevant to make a few brief closing remarks about its potential but also about the analytical avenues intended to be explored.

Firstly, it's important to highlight the various types of agency identified above. Agency is not only intentional and conscious actions that aim to reproduce gender practices, norms and representations, as some authors argue that West and Zimmerman emphasize. But, at the same time, is not only social actions that defy these same practices, norms and representations, as some authors seem to equate agency to actions that transform reality. At the same time, it's significant to note that the same individual may have both types of agency, depending on time and space.

Secondly, it's also relevant to analyze the individual perception of agential capacity and its relation to the individual sense of gender condition, which seems to offer interesting perspectives.

Finally, these types of social action will be analyzed taking into account various levels of analysis and their close interdependence. This can help to understand what can act as an enabler or an obstacle to a greater agency of reproduction or to a greater agency of defiance.

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From Women's emancipation model to Fetishism of the law – gender equality in communist and post-communist Albania [4]

Ermira Danaj

Abstract
This paper briefly presents some elements of gender equality in Albania during the communist and post-communist period. Gender equality policies during the communist system included top-down policies and legal provisions for the emancipation of women, focusing on the increased participation of women in the productive labor. The focus on the productive labor changed very little the traditional gender roles in the reproductive and care sphere. The post-1991 period started with a massive withdrawal of women from the economic and political sphere. Legal provisions and top-down policies remain the major measures for gender equality.

Key words: gender equality, emancipation, top-down policies, Albania

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to briefly present and compare gender relations and inequalities[5] in different gender regimes (Connell, 1994) in communist and post-communist Albania, and to highlight transformations or continuities through these two periods. Gender relations refer to all aspects of social life (Connell, 1994) but imply also a hierarchical relationship between women and men and not merely differences between them (Jackson and Scott, 2002, p. 10). With the concept of "gender regime" Connell refer to the "state of play in gender relations" in various institutions (Agraval, 2008, p. 7). What is very important with the concept of "gender regimes" is that it explains how we cannot refer to gender as something static and evolutional but also how gender relations may be different in various institutions (Agraval, 2008).

"Gender categories are not homogeneous. Gender is lived and experienced differently depending on one's class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality" (Jackson and Scott, 2002, p. 21). Thus being a woman and a man may mean different things during

[4] This paper is part of a broader research conducted as a Visiting Scholar at the New School, New York, made possible by the Fulbright program. The research is part of my doctoral thesis under the supervision of Prof. Janine Dahinden, which I thank immensely for her patience and support. Special thanks go to Elzbieta Matynia for her time and support and to Ann Snitow for her ongoing and immeasurable help and inspiration.

[5] By using "gender inequalities", I agree with Ann Snitow when she says, *"gender inequality is a necessary but not a sufficient description of the new immiseration"* (Snitow, 1999, 37). Snitow refers to another former socialist country, but this may refer to Albania as well.

the communist period in Albania in the framework of the "dictatorship of proletariat" and during the post-communist period in the framework of a free market economy and a weak welfare state.

For this paper I will use the concept of Women's emancipation model of Valentine Moghadam (1995) to refer and summarize the policies and actions undertaken during the communist period regarding gender inequalities. Legal reforms related to equality between men and women, gender equality in all areas, promotion of egalitarian laws about family and policies to facilitate women's participation in public life, are some of the key elements of this model. At the same time, women are seen as a productive force to be liberated from the chains of patriarchy so that they could contribute to the economic and political development of the socialist state (Moghadam, 1995; Dahinden, 2000) The first legal reforms undertaken by the newly established communist governments were including new progressive laws (Keefe *et al.,* 1971) regarding marriage, divorce and inheritance, with an emphasis on the gender equality (Moghadam, 1995; Rosenberg, 1991). Many policies undertaken in the former communist countries, aimed at providing various social services in favour of women's education and employment (Gjonca *et al*., 2008; Rosenberg, 1991; Penn and Massino, 2009). According to Moghadam, the first example of such a model comes from the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia which revolution, especially in its early years, remains avant-garde and stronger compared to any previous or subsequent revolution regarding gender equality (Moghadam, 1995, p. 336). The other former communist countries have later followed this model.

For the post-1991 period I refer to a concept that it is not directly related to gender equality policies, but that illustrates what is happening in many of the former socialist countries in many dimensions, the "*fetishism of the law"* (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006, p. 22).[6] This "fetishism of the law" is prevailing in Albania also regarding the gender issues. Things are being considered resolved as a law is adopted. The interventions and measures are parametric and not paradigmatic. Paradigmatic

[6] According to Jean and John Comaroff (2006, p. 26) *"it is not just interests, identities, rights, and injuries that have become saturated with legacy. Politics itself is migrating to the courts. Conflicts once joined in parliaments, by means of street protests, media campaigns, strikes, boycotts, blockades tend more and more to find their way to the judiciary. Class struggles are metamorphosing into class actions; people drawn together by material predicaments, culture, race, sexual preference, residence, faith, and habits of consumption become legal persons as their common plaints turn them into plaintiffs with common identities..."*

measures would put in question the structural gender inequalities and gender roles, while parametric measures try to relatively ease the situation, such as the gender quotas in politics. To illustrate the context regarding gender equality policies in the Albania of post-1991, I may as well refer to Connell regarding the patriarchal and weak welfare state, where the policies addressing gender equality and women rights are mainly procedure based (Connell, 1990).

Gender under communism 1944-1991 [7]

In the immediate situation before the establishment of the communist regime in Albania about 85% of the population was living in the rural areas, with a very low level of education and with an extremely poor health system. More than 80% of the population was illiterate and female illiteracy stood above 90% (Gjonca *et al.,* 2008, p. 263).

One of the strongest policies after the establishment of the communist regime was the emancipation of women. The focus was given to the participation of women in the productive labor force and to the new legal provisions. The new Constitution of March 14th 1946 includes equality of rights between women and men. According to the new law on marriage adopted in 1948 marriage was based on equal rights for both spouses (Keefe *et al*., 1971, p. 34; Danermark *et al*., 1989). One of the major changes of this new law was the age of marriage: 18 years for both sexes.[8] The concept of the head of the family, recognized by pre-Communist civil law was rejected. Each of the spouses, according to the 1948 law, had the right to choose his or her own occupation, profession, and residence. The basic divorce law, which was originally passed in 1948 provided that each spouse may ask for divorce on grounds on incompatibility of character, continued misunderstandings, irreconcilable hostility, or for any other

[7] On the 29th of November 1944 the country was liberated by the Nazi-Fascist occupation that had started on the 7th of April 1939. The Antifascist National Liberation War was lead by the Communist Party (founded on the 8th of November 1941) and this made it possible for this party to come to power after the liberation. *"Albania, or, as it proclaimed itself in 1946, the People's Republic of Albania, emerged from World War II under the control of the local Communist movement, which later adopted the name Albanian Workers' Party. The Communist regime asserted that it was a dictatorship of the proletariat—the workers and the peasants—and that it ruled according to the Leninist principle of democratic centralism"* (Keefe *et al.* 1971, p. 2-3).

[8] However, it was stipulated that persons as young as sixteen years old could be married but with the permission of the people's court (Keefe, p. 34)

reason that disrupted marital relations to the point where a common marital life had become impossible (Keefe *et al.,* 1971, p. 35; Danaj *et al,.* 2005, p. 64). The law was a very good, providing equality for both sexes, and quite an innovative law according to European standards of 1946 but the reality was quite different. First because it is very difficult to eradicate by law the prevailing traditional social norms and second because the new socialist system was giving a huge importance to the role of the "healthy socialist family". During the period 1950-64 divorces represented about 0.2 percent of the total married population (Keefe *et al*., 1971, p. 34).

Officially, the campaign for the emancipation of women was launched in 1967 by the leader of the Party of Labor, Enver Hoxha, with a series of speeches renewed in 1969 (Keefe *et al*., 1971; Danermark *et al.,* 1989).

Literacy was among the main objectives of the new regime, with a special focus on women and girls. In the immediate pre-war only 2.4% of secondary school students were girls. The investment in education, particularly female education during communism, was unprecedented in Albania. Female illiteracy improved from 92% in 1945 to less than 8% in 1989, and by 2002 it was less than 5% (Gjonca *et al.,* 2008, p. 284). The rate of the increase of the educational level of women and girls has been faster compared to that of men (Danermark *et al*., 1989).

Beside education, employment was another main policy of the communist government in line with the Women's emancipation model. Full employment of women and girls was aiming in several directions: it was seen as a strong element of emancipation but also as a huge labor force needed for the reconstruction of the countries (Rosenberg, 1991, p. 137). Another importance of the full employment of women and girls was to bring them in the public sphere, less influenced by the old traditions and practices and easier to educate them with the new principles of the new society. In the same time of stressing the full employment of women, a lot of other supportive social policies were implemented. Similar as in the other former communist countries, a pre-school care and crèches system was introduced (Rosenberg, 1991, p. 137; Gjonca *et al.,* 2008; Tahiraj, 2007, p. 12). All children aged between three and six were entitled to a free place in a state-funded kindergarten.

In 1960 the proportion of women in the total number of the employed population was 36%; it increased to 45% in 1970, 46.7% in 1986 and 47.4% in 1989

(Gjonca *et al.,* 2008; Danermark *et al.,* 1989). Regarding the sex segregation of the labor market, indeed there was an increase of the participation of women in sectors that were not usually considered as women's professions such as engineering, chemistry, electrical machinery and electronics (respectively 48%, 47% and 31% of total employment were women) (Danermark *et al.,* 1989). Nevertheless the sectors considered as women's professions, such as education or health (nurses) were still dominated by women.

Education and employment were followed by an increase of the participation of women in the public and political life. The Albanian Union of Women created in 1943 was in charge of the increase of women participation especially in the public and political life (Jacobs, 1945; Keefe *et al.,* 1971). During the legislature of 1974-78 the percentage of the women in the parliament was 35.2% (Keefe *et al.,* 1971), which is the highest percentage in the parliamentarian history of Albania (see table 1).

Table 1: Number and percentage of female MPs during 1921-1991

Year	*Total number of MPs*	*Number and percentage of female MPs*
1921	78	0
1925	75	0
1929-1939	57	0
1946-1950	82	6 (7.3)
1950-1954	121	17 (13.9)
1954-1958	134	16 (11.9)
1958-1962	186	17 (9.1)
1962-1966	214	25 (11.7)
1966-1970	240	39 (16.3)
1970-1974	264	71 (26.7)
1974-1978	250	88 (35.2)
78-82	250	81 (32.4)
82-86	250	78 (31.2)
87-91	250	75 (30)

Source: part of this table is from the publication "Women in the parliament", of the Parliament of Albania 2003 and the web page of Central Committee of Elections (www.cec.org.al)

Albanian women were in high positions in the communist bureaucracy and were active as highly qualified workers in the economy (Dahinden, 2000).

However, that was not translated with an equal division of roles and responsibilities within the household. The traditional gender roles (Crompton, 2000) were dominant within the household space. Sometimes the participation of women in the public life was done with many sacrifices especially regarding the relationship with their husbands (Culi, 2012; Keefe *et al.,* 1971). Similarly to the current situation,

women were squeezed between paid and unpaid work, and also other political and public activities. The situation was not the same for men who were exempted from the unpaid and care work and in many cases men were preserving their dominant role within the family. Women had to be as active as men in the public sphere but the situation was differing inside of household where women were in charge of the housework. In general, "housework and childcare were seen as primarily female responsibilities" (Rosenberg, 1991, p. 139). Another burden for women was to be good mothers. They had to be good workers and good mothers (Brunnbauer, 2000). The persistence of the traditional hierarchical gender roles within the household was reflected in the situation of women in the aftermath of the fall of the communist regime. There is a significant withdrawal of women from the productive sphere and their confinement to the reproductive and care sphere. As stated by Moghadam the answer to this withdrawal of women in the domestic sphere must be searched in the unequal division of the domestic work during communism and the overburden of women (Moghadam, 1995, p. 345). This made women to feel exploited from a system which objective was to liberate them (Culi, 2012; Penn and Massino, 2009; Tahiraj, 2007)

Post-1991 period and gender equality

The principal developments of the immediate post-communist period were the establishment of a new multiparty political system that was established as a first step toward a Western-style democracy; the new market economy began to introduce new rules regulating the supply and demand of work, housing, goods and services, etc. In a country where almost everything was controlled by the state, these developments resulted in periods of acute discomfort, high unemployment, and problems in the education system and other related social and economic issues (Danaj *et al.,* 2005, p. 7, 79). The introduction through shock therapy to capitalism was equally extreme, exposing the population to massive unemployment, uncontrolled demographic movement and a degree of government laissez-faire hard to distinguish from economic and judicial anarchy (De Waal, 2005, p. 5). One of the striking features of the aftermath of the fall of communism was the withdrawal of women from the economic, political and public life. The participation of women in the parliament dropped dramatically

from 30% to 4% in the first post-1991 parliament and 5.7% in the following legislature (see table 2 below). Also, the employment rate of women decreased sharply with the closing of many industries and services (UN Albania, 2004; Miluka, 2009). The gendered division of labor was sharpened again, with men in the productive sphere and women in the reproductive one. As Heyns (1995, p. 1344) says, "privatization became a gendered concept. For men it meant entrepreneurship, for women domesticity". This illustrates the withdrawal of women within the household because of the shortage of employment opportunities but also because of the closing of the social services until then covered by the state. The participation of women in the labor market since then has improved. Nevertheless, their participation in the labor market is still significantly lower compared to that of men. In 2012 the labor force participation rate of women was 56.7 percent whereas for males 74.4 percent. Compared to the year 2011, the female participation in the labor market has decreased with 3.6 percent. Another feature of women and labor market is that 55.8% of employed women are self-employed in agriculture sector, 18.7 are employed in the public sector and 25.5 in the private sector compared to 33.3 of men in agriculture 18.0 in the public sector and 48.7 in the private sector. 87% of the self employed women in the agriculture sector work for self-subsistence, which highly limits their economic situation (INSTAT 2012; 2011; 2014). Glass and wall ceilings (Danaj, Forthcoming 2014; Wharton, 2012) are other characteristics of the women participation in the labor market, with women mostly employed in education and health, and with a significantly lower participation in the higher positions in all the sectors. Gender pay gap in 2011 is 17.63 (Miluka, 2011). Violence against women remains a very problematic issue in Albania with 60% of women having experienced domestic violence (INSTAT, 2014). Participation in the labor market and politics also are highly gendered. Women in Albania work 2 hours more than men (in paid and unpaid work). They are almost exclusively in charge of the unpaid care work (INSTAT, 2014).

Table 2: Number and percentage of female MPs after 1991

Year	*Total number of MPs*	*Number and percentage of female MPs*
1991-1992	250	10 (4%)
1992-1996	140	8 (5.7%)
1996-1997	140	21 (15%)
1997-2001	155	11 (7.1%)
2001-2005	140	8 (5.7%)
2005-2009	140	10 (7.1%)
2009-2013	140	23 (16.4%)
2013 -	140	25 (17.8%)

Source: Data for this table are found in the publication "Women in the parliament" of the Parliament of Albania 2003, the web page of Central Committee of Elections (www.cec.org.al) and the publication of INSTAT "Women and Men in Albania 2013

The fall of communism was followed by the withdrawal of women from politics. Until 2009 the participation of women in the parliament was very low. Gender electoral quotas were introduced in the new electoral code in 2009. Nevertheless, the electoral code has not been fully respected since its adoption. The case of the gender quotas and its implementation show how "parity is something weak governments can give women without spending a cent, legitimizing themselves as democratic in situations that often barely deserve the name" (Mala Htun quoted in Snitow, 2009, p. 66). During the elections of 2009, the first elections with the new electoral code, the Central Electoral Commission did not accept the first candidate lists because they were not respecting the gender quota. Despite the growth in the number of women in the parliament of 2009 it resulted that parties were using "gender equality" only as a campaign element, and women were placed at the end of the lists (Ekonomi *et al.,* 2009). In a proportional electoral system this means to not be elected. The situation worsened in the following local elections in 2011 where the number of women candidates for head of local units was 3.5 per cent of the total number of candidates. The law was not respected even in the last general elections of 2013. The main political parties were fined by the Central Electoral Commission to pay the respective financial penalty. In addition, in case of the withdrawal of any elected MP the law specifies that the vacation should be filled by the less represented gender, in this case women. During January 2014, some of the ministers of the 2013 new government retired from their position of members of the parliament. As a result and in respect of the law, the women candidates in the list should fill the vacations. However, for two prefectures, all women candidates retired so that the men candidates could fill the vacation and

become MPs[9] [10]. This little example shows that we may have very good laws, but the implementation lacks and the political (and party) structures remain patriarchal.

The reality is far more complex and the structural gender inequalities cannot be eliminated only with procedural measures. Since the beginning of the 90s a significant number of laws and amendments regarding gender equality have been adopted in Albania. However, various reports state that the implementation is problematic, and gender inequalities are still very persistent. The "fetishism of the law" is illustrated also by the lack of protest. Struggles for gender equality and the women's movement, similarly to other former socialist countries, are conducted mainly in the framework of the NGO sector. "Gender as a grant" (Snitow, 1999, p. 40) illustrates the main feature of the work for gender equality, which may be extended to the entire development of the NGO sector in the post-1991 Albania (for more details on the development of the NGO sector in Albania see Amy and Gjermeni, 2013). This shows also the great difficulties of this work with imposed funds and priorities.

Conclusions

The achievements during the communist regime were huge compared to the previous period, especially regarding the participation of women in the productive sphere and education. Increased participation of women in community and politics was also significant. But patriarchal gender roles were still persisting. Women were squeezed between multiple burdens, and all this in the framework of an "authoritarian state" (Brunnbauer, 2000). The emancipation needs a pushing force from below in order to be liberating (Laclau, 1996) while in Albania it was a top-down one. But, the focus on legal provisions and top-down policies are also characterizing the post-1991 work on gender equality. The "tokenism without power" of the socialism (Heyns, 1995, p. 1345) is somehow the same tokenism of today, where the major achievements regarding gender equality refer only to mere percentages of women here and there. Communism is gone, but "democracy" did not translate into women's freedom" (Snitow, 2009, p. 62). In the context of a very weak welfare state and a technical civil

[9] http://www.ata.gov.al/lenia-e-mandatit-te-deputeteve-debate-ne-kuvend-28235.html
[10] http://www.shqiptarja.com/politike/2732/lsi-maratone-doreheqjesh-e-13-ta-ne-liste-merr-mandatin-e-deputetes-199842.html

society, women continue to be in a vulnerable situation: The freedom of speech is not enough if women can't find the spaces needed to articulate it.

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Body quarrel: feminine aesthetics in Portuguese poetry of the first quarter of the XX century

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Abstract
The first quarter of the twentieth century in Portugal was characterized by a series of important historical events: the regicide, the fall of the Monarchy and establishment of the Republic and the First World War. By this time, women could not yet vote and they were systematically ignored in the debate of crucial social issues. Therefore, the main question here addressed is: how can poetry as free embodiment take part in a gender revolution? The answer lies in the consequent breakout of feminine sentimental literature, which entitled women to reveal themselves, enabling the poetic scrutiny of their intimacy: they dared to expose their dreams, desires, fulfilments and despairs, firming an identity pact through poetry.

Keywords: poetry, women, aesthetics, body.

Women in Portugal during the First Republic

By the beginning of the XX century, women in Portugal could not yet vote (in fact, the government explicitly inhibited women from voting through a law dated from 3rd of July 1913, only dismissed in 1931); a great majority didn't have access to education (the 1911 census established 75% of illiteracy amongst the Portuguese population), neither to a professional career. The participation of Portugal in The First World War, in 1916, caused increased economic problems and the weakening of republican identity. By that time worldwide changes and great social issues dominated the international agenda. As a result, several feminine associations emerged, like "Comissão Feminina pela Pátria" (Feminine Commission for Homeland), in 1914, "Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas", (Portuguese Women Crusade), in 1916, etc., and, correspondingly, a significant number of feminine periodicals appeared: *A Esperança: Semanário de Recreio Literário Dedicado às Damas* (*Hope: Weekly Literary Amusement for the Ladies*), in 1868; *Almanaque das Senhoras para Portugal e Brasil* (*Ladies' Almanac for Portugal and Brazil*), in 1871; *Alma Feminina* (*Feminine Soul*), in 1917; *Eva: Jornal da Mulher e do Lar (Eve: Woman and Home Newspaper*), in 1925; *Portugal Feminino* (*Feminine Portugal*), in 1930, just to name a few of them. The tie between women and literature is first straightened and developed within this kind of publication. More and more, a few educated women insisted on expressing themselves, looking for their unique and personal voice to convey the richness of

feminine world, so as to affirm, little by little, that being a woman was something valuable, and not at all silenceable:

Segundo João Esteves (2001), na imprensa, a partir de 1906, encontram-se com regularidade reflexões sobre o feminismo. Aí encontraremos Albertina Paraíso, Ana de Castro Osório, Lucinda Tavares, Maria Veleda e Virgínia Quaresma, tendo a temática feminista passado a fazer parte do conteúdo de diários como *O Mundo* e *Vanguarda*. Os textos dedicados ao feminismo pelo "Jornal da Mulher", secção iniciada em 1906 no periódico *O Mundo*, e da responsabilidade de Albertina Paraíso, permitem compreender o que reivindicavam as feministas Portuguesas e o que se passava no final da Monarquia. Por exemplo, a *Vanguarda*, diário republicano independente, inclui, em 1906, a secção "Galeria feminista", criada após a apresentação da Secção Feminista da Liga Portuguesa da Paz (Silveirinha, 2012: 170).

[According to João Esteves (2001), in the press, from 1906 on, there are recurrent reflections on feminism. There we will find Albertina Paraíso, Ana de Castro Osório, Lucinda Tavares, Maria Veleda e Virgínia Quaresma, as the feminist issue gains ground on daily newspapers like *O Mundo* e *Vanguarda*. The texts dedicated to feminism by "Jornal da Mulher", section initiated in 1906 in the periodic *O Mundo*, with Albertina Paraíso as responsible, spread the word about the Portuguese feminists claims and what was going on at the end of the monarchy. For instance, a *Vanguarda*, an independent republican diary, includes, by 1906, the section "Feminist Gallery", created after the presentation of the Feminist Section from Portuguese League for Peace.]

From 1915 to 1925, a group of female poets was entrenched in the press on a regular basis, electing the sonnet as their favorite poetic form: Virgínia Vitorino, Amélia de Guimarães Vilar, Marta de Mesquita da Câmara, Zulmira Falcarreira and Florbela Espanca are some of these female authors. Then, many of them would see their poems edited in a monograph, with a few of them even sponsoring their own publications, like Amélia de Guimarães Vilar (*O Meu Rosário*, [*My Rosary*] 1920). Some of these editions were quite successful: Virgínia Vitorino's *Namorados* [*Boyfriends*] (1920) was edited six times in a role. All these women poets, with the exception of Zulmira Falcarreira, are included in a Portuguese feminine anthology, *Dicionário no Feminino* [*Dictionary in the Feminine*] (2005), where the social, cultural and educational accomplishments of several women are recognized in a biographical entry. Reading the respective entries, common ground between the lives of the female

authors becomes clear: they all started writing in the press; they all wrote poetry and adopted the sonnet as major form; they all received an education, and had their own professional careers. In fact, Amélia de Guimarães Vilar was an accountant, Marta de Mesquita da Câmara a journalist, and Virgínia Vila Nova de Sousa Vitorino an actress.

Embodying poetry: Body depiction and gender emancipation

In recent studies the representation of the body has assumed particular relevance in the construction of a female identity, across literary genres and in different historical periods, as to establish new historical criteria, reframing gender divisions and launching social dynamics (Curti, 1998; Babana-Hampton, 2002; Ferfeli, 2011; Ruiz, (ed.), 2012).

As a matter of fact, body references play a very significant role in a certain literary *momentum*, in Portugal, as the ultimate medium for life and its most inherent feelings. Translating women, by a part-whole relationship, the body is depicted in detail. Therefore, in the poems of the mentioned female authors, the reader can find lips, kisses, blood, abandoned bodies, hands, faces, asking for confrontation, in a subtle assumption of sexuality. Butler (1993: 1) asks «Is there a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender?». These poetic exercises are based on the depiction of the materiality of the feminine body, absorbed by an array of actions taking place in a parallel dimension to the real world. The parts that constitute the body are displayed as objects of discovery of the yet unknown world of femininity. In their attempt to assert for a renewed landscape, with its bodily pathways, they trigger an identity. Power, sex, and body materiality are so overtly codified that gender is no longer the issue, being replaced by a feminine perspective on life and death. If «"sex" is, from the start, normative» (Butler, 1993: 1), what these poems, endorsing an identity dynamics, want to evade is precisely the normative effect, responsible for the diminished role of women in society for a long time. Although «sentimental», as the critic puts it, the poems conceal the materiality of the body with the inner world of thoughts and feelings, that side by side structure the poetic sequence. From this tension between the material and immaterial, results the affirmative response of a projected "I".

Performing their femininity in various ways, disclosing as many body actions and reactions as possible, these women poets called for a more active role in relation to their own lives and towards society in general. Melo (2009: 2) states about the poetry of Florbela Espanca:

Tem-se dito que o sujeito feminino na poesia de Florbela recusa a condição de objecto e afirma sua condição de protagonista activo. Talvez a manifestação mais evidente desse processo de afirmação dos poderes do sujeito feminino resida na tomada de consciência do corpo, que, na sua sensualidade e erotismo, afirma a força de *Eros* (2).

[It has been generally assumed that the female subject in Florbela's poetry refuses the object condition by claiming a main character condition. The most powerful manifestation of this female subject lies maybe in the awareness of her body, which assumes the strength of *Eros*, through sensuality and eroticism.]

This was, in fact, the main issue: how women could legitimate their subjectivity, appealing to their own way of codifying the world, and reacting to what was happening around them. Poetry was used in a society where law still bounded women's obedience to their husbands to probe the effects of individuality as a road to full citizenship:

Nas sociedades sedentárias que permitiram a acumulação de riqueza, os homens, pela sua força física em regra superior, ocuparam-se do gado e das tarefas agrícolas, vindo a controlá-las. A guerra era feita tendencialmente por homens, permitindo o seu adestramento e o seu acesso a funções públicas de índole militar. Porventura mais grave, num círculo que se quebraria apenas no século XX: a cultura era disponibilizada, em primeira linha, aos homens, com um relevo particular para o ensino e o estudo do Direito. Ficava a mulher remetida para lides domésticas e para a educação dos filhos de mais tenra idade: desempenho, de resto, prejudicado justamente pelo problema cultural. A inferioridade física, económica e, depois, cultural, da mulher, teve reflexos jurídicos até, praticamente, à segunda metade do século XX (Cordeiro, 2011: 65).

[In sedentary societies that allowed the accumulation of wealth, men, due to their superior physical strength, in general, were responsible for the cattle and other agricultural tasks, becoming in charge of this outside work. The war was essentially made by men, allowing its training and the access to military public functions. Possibly even more serious, in a circle that would only be broken in the XX century: culture was

mainly available to men, especially in the teaching area and in field of law. Women were assigned the domestic activities and the education of the younger sons, in which their performance was conditioned by the cultural problem. The physic, economic, and, afterwards, cultural inferiority of women had legal consequences until almost the second half of the XX century.]

As the quotation above well shows women's discrimination lied dominantly in their segregation from culture. The dependent condition of women was a result of the impediments faced when trying to access proper education and full cultural enjoyment (Cordeiro, 2011: 69). Hence, as late as 1946, Plínio Salgado (1946, 59-60) still maintained that education was of minor advantage to women, because an educated woman without religious feelings was less capable than a peasant. The author argued that, on one hand, women's greatest aims depended upon an irreprehensible honor, and, on the other hand, proclaimed that women were characterized by an unhealthy curiosity, that, untamed, would surely lead to their irreparable loss. Salgado's argument that women's condition was inherently passive must be underlined. Undoubtedly, this passive nature towards masculine authority had been emphasized all throughout the history, in literature, theatre, civil right, social conventions, sexual perspectives, etc.

The same feminine poetic movement took place in several countries, across continents, with little differences in time. In the United States of America, the "genteel lyric" spread as early as the second half of the nineteenth century (Bennett, 2003). Other studies also indicate that this literary path was also being followed in Brazil (Oliveira, 2009) and in Great Britain (Craciun, 2003). Despite the critics' dismay, Portuguese and otherwise, the main idea to be stressed is that the so-called "sentimental literature" had a decisive role in a more large feminist engagement, for the poems produced demanded social awareness in relation to women's condition. As said before, the conveyed testimonies of intimacy related to everyday life, more than regulating sexual and gender differences, were prone to establish a new identity.

The first poem here analyzed is from the book *Apaixonadamente* [*Passionately*] (1923), by Virgínia Vila Nova de Sousa Vitorino (1895-1969):

BRUMA

Não sei quem anda a perseguir-me os passos
N'esta amargura enorme em que me agito.
Ergo os braços, em ânsia de infinito,
E sempre encontro fim para os meus braços.

Desce ao meu rosto de orgulhosos traços
A rigidez amarga do granito.
Olho as estrelas uma a uma, e grito
À imensidão solene dos espaços…

Toco o império divino da loucura,
E subo tanto, a uma tão grande altura,
Que nem tu, minha sombra, lá me atinges!

Se alguém me busca, eu vou mais alto logo.
E se estonteada, às vezes me interrogo,
Sinto em mim o silêncio das esfinges!...

[MIST]

[I don't know who is haunting my steps
In this deep sadness that makes me restless.
I lift my arms, searching infinity,
And I always find an end to my arms.

It goes down to my face of proud traces
The bitter stiffness of granite.
I look into the stars, one by one, and I shout
To the solemn immensity of the spaces…

I touch madness divine empire,
And I go up so much, to such big altitude
That not even you, my shadow, can reach me there.

If someone is looking for me, I go immediately higher.
And if dizzy, I sometimes question myself,
I feel in me the silence of the sphinxes.]

In this poem, we would like to point out to how much of the body is conveyed so that the wandering persona can fully express a striking indefiniteness of state and feelings, a mist of infinity that surrounds her defying gestures. All the movement

pursued by the persona is emphasized by the great contrast called upon by "the silence of the sphinxes" of the last, concluding verse. So, there is a contradiction at stake that revolves around the shout of the body and the silence of an analytic voice, the voice of reason. The search enactment is what exhales the persona, leading her to escape her own shadow. The poem's persona looks for "infinity", "immensity", "divine empire", "big altitude", but somehow feels trapped by her frenzy and deep sadness. Nevertheless, it is the pulsing body that inflicts frenzy on the reader himself for he too is forced to somehow look for a way out through the poem.

The second poem, from de same volume, is "Salomé":

SALOMÉ

Olha-se a furto, inquieta, nos espelhos
Que lhe reflectem a beleza e a graça…
E sacode, fremente, quando passa,
As anilhas de prata dos artelhos…

Ergue-se toda e logo cai, de joelhos.
Os perfumes são quentes; a luz baça…
E aquele corpo já não anda, esvoaça
Sobre os tapetes flácidos, vermelhos…

E corre sempre! Tilintando, as contas
Como serpentes perturbadas, tontas,
Cingem-lhe os braços, o pescoço, a trança.

Desmaiam chamas… Vai surgindo a lua…
Deusa do ritmo, Salomé, flutua,
E ri, n'um grande riso, e dança… dança…

[SALOME]

[She looks at herself, from aside, uneasy, in the mirrors
reflecting her beauty and grace…
And shakes, restless, when passing,
The silver rings on her ankles…

She rises and immediately falls, on her knees.

The perfumes are warm; the light pale…
And that body no longer wonders, flies
Just above the flaccid red carpets…

And she always runs! The tinkling beads,
Like distressed snakes, dizzy,
Fold her arms, the neck, the twist.

Flames dismay… The moon makes her appearance…
Goddess of the rhythm, Salome, floats,
And laughs, with a big laugh, and dances… dances…]

All the description of Salome is based on body referents, as this poem addresses the modern woman, the glamour silhouette that goes around dancing and spreading her grace and charm. This woman dominates the surroundings by never stop dancing, relying on her body to enact and react daily life. The seductive power of Salome is based on a well diversified body performance, comprising rise and fall, wonder and fly, run and float, but mainly consists of everlasting dance. The surroundings either correspond or submit to that almighty body, as snakes go dizzy, flames weaker, with even the moon coming to assist the goddess of the rhythm. Salome spreads her womanliness everywhere, defying the world with beauty and grace.

The last poem here analyzed is from Zulmira Falcarreira (1867-19??). She was born in 1867, in Rio de Janeiro. Her father was Pompílio Augusto Gonçalves Franco, viscount of Falcarreira, and her mother Carolina Augusta Ferreira d'Almeida, viscountess of Falcarreira. She published her poems in several newspapers, namely *Ilustração Portuguesa* [*Portuguese Illustration]*, *A Mulher* [*The Woman*] and *Diário de Notícias* [*News Diary*]. She wrote under the pseudonym «Blue». "Na vinha" ("In the vineyard") is from a manuscript, still unpublished, titled *Asas Libertas* [*Free Wings*], from 1922:

NA VINHA

Outubro: ao meio-dia – Outono em fora
Sob a guarda de um clima temperado,
Fomos dar o passeio costumado,

Gozando d' alegria d' essa hora:

Em toda a vinha a cor mudou agora
E no seu grande corpo abandonado
Sangra, rubra de dor, de lado a lado,
Sangra a angústia dos cachos que ela chora:

Nós, caminhando a par, notámos cedo
Que tínhamos os dois algum segredo
Alguma grande mágoa inconfessada…

E entrelaçando as mãos e unindo o rosto,
Deixámo-nos ficar até o sol-posto,
Olhando para a vinha ensanguentada.

[IN THE VINEYARD]

[October, noon, Autumn outside
With the mild climate as guardian,
We went for the usual walk,
Enjoying the hour's happiness.

Along the vineyard the color has now changed
And in her big abandoned body
Bleeds, scarlet from the pain, from side to side,
Bleeds the anguish of the bunches, that she cries.

We noticed early, walking side by side,
That the two of us had some secret
Some big, unconfessed sorrow…

Interlacing hands and bringing our faces together,
We let us be until the sunset,
Looking at the bleeding vineyard.]

In this last poem, the vineyard embodies the state of mind of the walking lovers. For that, the vineyard is conveniently personified, through a sequence of body metaphors. As a matter a fact, the first and general view of the vineyard is a "big

abandoned body". The personification gets stronger by the use of very vivid images ("Bleeds, scarlet from the pain, from side to side", "Bleeds the anguish of the bunches, that she cries") relying on the repetition of "bleed". The vineyard is agonizing, just like the lovers, who struggle with secrets and unconfessed feelings. In this poem, nature is a very sensitive body to the extent that it reproduces and echoes the feelings of those that wander, bleeding like them. The nature's function as *speculum* is based on the image of a great agonizing body that does not seek for cure or redemption.

Final remarks

The analyzed poems respond to the question of what it means to be a woman. In showcasing women's particular way of experiencing the world, they endorse women as a specific referent and subject. This poetic emancipation leads the way to a new mentality. For a start, women are challenged not to see themselves seating in an armchair, doing the dishes or going to the theatre, but in a new settlement, where their feelings, states of mind and body experiences count, and can even be translated into artistic form. The body depicted by these women poets is not in the least passive. It comes as the ultimate medium to express feminine aims, feelings and desires; it is also a bleeding body in the sense that it shows no fear of exposing intimacy, with its weaknesses and dismays. More than just "feminine literature à la garçonne" (Pereira, 1983: 872), and taking the discussion beyond literary value and poetic relevance, this poetry argues for the body's major importance in feminist theory: «Theories about the sexuality of the body, power and the political control of women's bodies by patriarchy, are central to feminism» (Humm: 1999: 26-27). So, in the end, it all comes to a claiming surpassing body.

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Sexuality, gender and confined bodies: Female prisoners experiences of intimate visits in a Portuguese Prison

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Abstract
In a context designed to discipline and control prisoners' bodies, the inhibition, conditioning, and regulation of intimacy and sexuality raise paradoxical questions in the scope of prison policies. In this paper, drawing from data provided by interviews in a Portuguese female prison, our aim is to explore how intimacy practices of heterosexual couples are reconfigured in the shadow of penal control, with a particular focus on the experience of intimate visits. The analysis shows how women's narratives report conflicting and juxtaposing experiences regarding intimate visits, revealing an *ambivalent intimacy*.

Introduction

In a context designed to discipline and control the prisoners' bodies, the inhibition, conditioning, and regulation of intimacy and sexuality raise paradoxical questions in the scope of prison policies. Traditionally, the deprivation of heterosexual relationships within prison settings has led prisoners to consider it one of the main "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958). Within this framework, much of the research on this topic has focused on "alternative" sexual outlets in prison, such as same sex relationships, sexual assaults among prisoners, and masturbation (Hensley and Tewksbury, 2002). However, less attention has been given to open venues for the experience of sexuality among heterosexual couples in the prison context; criminal justice systems have been enabling this in several countries through the implementation of intimate/family visits.

In countries such as USA and Canada, there is some research that explores the reasons underlying the implementation of intimate and family prison visits, and analyses the reactions of institutional actors (managers and prison officers) to these penitentiary interventions (Bennett, 1989; Goetting, 1982; Vacheret, 2005). However, there is still very little information about how prisoners, and in particular imprisoned women, construct, experience, and perceive their intimate and sexual relations in prison settings (but see Lima, 2006 and Padovani, 2011 regarding the Brazilian context). In this paper, drawing from data provided by interviews in a Portuguese female prison, our aim is to explore how intimacy practices of heterosexual couples

are reconfigured in the shadow of penal control, with a particular focus on the experience of intimate visits.

Intimate visits in Portugal: implementation and gender asymmetries

Although international literature and official penal system statements present a wide variety of reasons relating to justifying intimate visits in prisons, which vary according to the countries and periods in which these programmes are implemented, three approaches stand out. One of them argues that, by meeting the sexual needs of prisoners, intimate visits could reduce the tension, hostility and violence among prisoners, presumably because of a long accumulation of frustrated sexual energy (D'Alessio *et al*., 2012; Goetting, 1982, p.63).

The second perspective considers that intimate visits might reduce the formation of same-sex relationships, particularly among female prisoners (Padovani, 2011). The third argument indicates these visitation programmes are essential to preserve, enhance, and uphold relationships between prisoners and their partners, fostering marital stability and preventing separations commonly caused by imprisonment (Goetting, 1982, p.65; Vacheret, 2005). By extension, the maintenance of family relationships is also beneficial both as an instrument that enhances social control over prisoners (functioning as an incentive for prisoners to conform to institutional rules) and as a means that probably increases the likelihood of post-release success (Comfort *et al*., 2005, p.6; Goetting, 1982).

The implementation of intimate visits in Portugal was framed within the third perspective. In Portugal, intimate visits emerged as a response to a recommendation of the Ombudsman and were conceptualized as a mechanism "which aims to prevent prisoners' family disruption as well as other behavioural deviations resulting from the special conditions in which prisoners are located" (Provedoria de Justiça, 1996, p. 110). Nowadays, these encounters still aim to preserve family stability. In order to have access to intimate visits, prisoners must prove they maintain a "stable emotional relationship" (Law 51/2011; Law 115/2009).

In Portugal, intimate visits have been granted to heterosexual couples since 1999 and to same sex couples since 2009[11]. The pilot project began to be implemented in "Vale de Judeus" prison and then in "Funchal", expanding to several other prisons around the country since then. However, until 2010 there were no facilities available in Portuguese female prisons to facilitate intimate visits. Up to that year, imprisoned women had intimate visits only if their partners were also imprisoned.

These gender asymmetries connect to broader issues. As Cunha and Granja (forthcoming) notice "prisons are gendered institutions whose space and organization in themselves express a gender system that, in the case of women's prisons, prioritizes reproduction and domesticity over other dimensions". That is, specific requirements related to women in prison tend to embody and reproduce traditional gender ideologies, addressing female offenders mostly as mothers (Palomar, 2007), undervaluing other aspects of their identity, namely their sexuality (Constant, 2013). Thus, while imprisoned women in Portugal have for a long time had access to parenting within prison,[12] in contrast, male prisoners have had access to sexuality, through admission to intimate visits.

Currently, these differences no longer exist in the formal realm. Following broader Portuguese policies addressing gender inequalities, prison regulations have also incorporated the principles of neutrality and formal equality between women and men. Currently, both male and female prisoners may have access to intimate visits if the prison in which they are located has the necessary conditions[13] and if they meet all the requirements to facilitate the intimate visits' regime[14]. In this system, visits last 3 hours at most and occur on a monthly basis.

[11] For the integration of same sex relationships in the intimate visits regime see Law 115/2009. During the period of our fieldwork, however, no same sex conjugal visits took place in the prison facility where this research was based.

[12] Mothers are allowed to keep their children with them in prison until they are 3, exceptionally 5 years old (see Cunha & Granja (forthcoming) regarding the changes on parenting in prison that have occurred in recent years in Portugal).

[13] Intimate visits must be held in appropriate facilities, equipped with furniture and suitable conditions, namely privacy (Law 51/2011).

[14] In order to enter the intimate visits regime, prisoners must be married or maintain an analogous relationship. Prisoners may also be authorized to receive intimate visits if, in the course of prison sentence, they start an affective relationship with someone from whom they have received regular visits or regular mail over a year. The prisoner and the visitor person must be older than 18 years, unless they are married. Prisoners who benefitted in the last six months from home leaves cannot have access to intimate visits (Law 51/2011).

Methodology

This article forms part of research conducted in Portugal. Its main purpose is to explore, from female and male prisoners' perspectives, the familial and social impacts of imprisonment. Our analysis derives from data gathered from twenty interviews with female prisoners conducted in a Portuguese prison, between April and September 2011. The participants' verbal consent to conduct and record the interviews was obtained after they were informed about the study's aim and their anonymity was guaranteed. The interviews lasted, on average, a hundred minutes and the tapes were transcribed verbatim.

We used a theoretical sample, which was selected according to the development of the research. All participants are Portuguese, convicted, had been imprisoned for more than six months and had at least one child. Five respondents are Roma/Gypsies.

The interviews focused on the women's life stories, their family and intimate relationships and issues regarding their children, both before and during incarceration. For the purposes of this article, we shall focus exclusively on a partial analysis of the interviews, exploring how imprisoned women who maintain heterosexual relationships experience and conceptualize intimacy in specific constrained settings; we shall examine the implications of intimate visits for prisoners' experiences and for their romantic relationships.

Data were systematically categorised and synthesised into main themes. Based on a comprehensive and interpretative analysis of the narratives, the more illustrative extracts were selected in relation to: i) the meanings prisoners attribute to intimate visits; ii) the ways in which intimate visits imply the transposition of intimacy from the private to the public domain, iii) the reasons why some prisoners do not want to benefit from intimate visits.

The participants ranged in age from 20 to 52 years old, with an average age of 36. The women had low levels of education and social status: nine had fewer than five years of schooling and, prior to imprisonment, the majority had been dependent on welfare owing to low incomes, precarious work conditions, and high rates of unemployment.

Eight women interviewed were serving sentences for property offences and seven prisoners were convicted of crimes related to drug trafficking. Five participants were imprisoned because of crimes against people. Respondents' sentences ranged from two years and seven months to 25 years. Eighteen women were serving sentences of more than four and a half years.

Regarding the visits, six of the participants had intimate visits, three refused to enter the regime, two maintained same sex relationships with other prisoners, three women did not meet the necessary requirements for accessing these kinds of visits and six did not maintain intimate relationships. In the case of the partners of the prisoners who maintained heterosexual relationships (n=12), 10 of them were also imprisoned.

Results and discussion

"People shouldn't think that we only have a visit just to have sex": The meanings of intimate visits for female prisoners

Prison experience reconfigures the boundaries and contexts of intimate relationships (Comfort *et al.*, 2005). Women report how the forced separation, surveillance and discipline that characterize life in prison, disruptively influence their intimate relationships, by extensively limiting and constraining interactions with partners:

> *It's complicated [to maintain a relationship while we are imprisoned]. The distance makes us move away a bit from each other.* Raquel (aged 20, theft, 7 years).

Within this framework, as reported by Mariana, prisoners who have access to intimate visits view them as a crucial mechanism in the upholding of social ties and in the maintenance of marital stability:

> *It is very good [to have intimate visits]. The first time I even cried there, I didn't believe I was there. We are together, we talk, we cry, we cuddle, we spoil each other. Those things that we do when we love someone (...) People shouldn't think that we only have a visit just to have sex (...) [Intimate visits] allow the couple to get closer, for people to maintain family ties. I think it's great!* Mariana (aged 39, drug trafficking, 7 years).

As Mariana describes, the beneficial influences that women outline do not necessarily stem from the sexual encounters that intimate visits enable. Regardless of the time prisoners remained deprived of heterosexual intercourse during the course of their prison sentence (which was variable among the interviewed women), participants mainly highlight the emotional closeness to their partners that these visits allow. As Andreia says:

> *It is a really powerful force that we provide for one another. Of course everything happens! Sex happens... But there is something superior that makes me feel so good, so good.* Andreia (aged 52, theft, 5 years and 6 months).

While bonding tends to emerge as a crucial aspect in the experience of intimate visits, sex generally assumes second place in prisoners' narratives. This is consistent with women prisoners' narratives, reported by Cunha (1994) before the implementation of intimate visits in Portuguese prisons, about the lack of sex among the pains of imprisonment when compared to the absence of other aspects of conjugal relationships. These gendered narratives reproduce broader patterns related to how women describe and conceive sexuality experiences (Pais, 1996). Sexual activities are described by female prisoners as conditional on the establishment of a strong bond between the members of the couple, which translates into commitment, reliability, loyalty, affection and companionship.

As Raquel shows, the absence of a "stable" relationship may constitute one of the reasons that lead prisoners to reject intimate visits, despite their partner's pressures to take part in this regime. This decision illustrates the ways in which women, although deprived of liberty, may still exert a certain amount of control and power over their bodies and their intimate relationships:

> *He [boyfriend] keeps putting a lot of pressure on me to accept intimate visits, he insists too much. I think that love isn't all about sex. There must be loyalty, peace, harmony, kindness, love, but not just sex! I am a woman. I know how to wait for him. I am very patient. (...) My boyfriend is afraid that I will leave prison and betray him with the first one that makes a move towards me, but no, I'm not like that.* Raquel (aged 20, theft, 7 years).

Nevertheless, it is important to outline that the increased value that women assign to the romantic dimension of sexual encounters, may also serve to validate their

sexuality morally, owing to the different norms that traditionally regulate the sex life of men and women (Pais, 1996, p.4).

Besides fostering the maintenance of social ties, as Maria asserts, the intimate visits may also provide women "an escape" from prison life, helping prisoners to "forget", even for a moment, where they are:

> *It is a time that by being with him, we completely forget where we are, we forget we are in prison.* Maria (aged 35, attempted murder, 6 years).

This sense of alienation from their surroundings tends to be fostered, on the one hand, by the reduction of exposure, control and surveillance that characterize prison routines and regular visits with relatives, and, on the other hand, by the particular logistics that intimate visits involve. Isabel refers to the differences she experienced between regular and intimate visits:

> *For 3 years I wasn't with him alone. We used to see each other every month but it is different, the guards walking around us, it is different, completely different! Three years later we were able to be alone with each other, oh…. I can't explain that feeling, no, there's no explanation. Those three hours just seem to fly. We are always waiting for those visits and when we get there, time flies.* Isabel (aged 32, drug trafficking, 5 years).

In contrast to the routine activity and exposure during regular contacts with relatives, as Maria Luísa remarks, for intimate visits, the organization of the room resembles an ordinary bedroom in a house, clearly underlining a difference from the cells in which prisoners are placed on an everyday basis:

> *Those three hours are wonderful [laughs]. We are also imprisoned but it is not in a cell, it is in a room, a room that has furniture, has a stove, and makes us forget for a bit where we are. Seems like we are elsewhere, not in jail. That's why I think that our relationship – it was already good - it's getting even better. Being here, without seeing him, we just write love letters and see each other once a month (...) It's like we were dating again [laughs].* Maria Luísa (aged 44, fraud, 5 years).

A relatively common idea among imprisoned women is that the privacy and intimate environment made possible by these kinds of visits, coupled with the exchange of letters, and the emotional investment of the couple in their relationship,

may foster the sublimation and revival of romantic relationships, which, in turn, play a crucial role in prisoners' motivation to face prison daily hardships. As Andreia points:

> *There [in intimate visits] we show each other that we have the same strength. If I didn't have this passion and if I didn't know that I have someone to live by my side with this strength, with this love ... I don't know how life in prison would be. This is not easy. (...) Just seeing him each month, knowing he is doing fine, I am too, and that we have great prospects for the future... The relationship keeps getting better, better!* Andreia.

Prison as an "open book": the collapse of boundaries between public and private domains

In the prison context, the sexual activity of prisoners is no longer seen as an intimate experience, enacted within a "wall of secrecy" and privacy (Elias, 1939, pp.307–308). All prisoners' behaviours, including their sexual interactions, become a matter of public interest within the penal realm (Lima, 2006; Comfort *et al*., 2005).

Within this framework, the experience of sexuality in prison, especially through intimate visits, shows how intimacy is subtly transposed from the private to the public domain. Mariana's narrative clearly reflects this understanding;

> *I was the first to have intimate visits here. When I was accepted my approval was affixed in all the wards. Oh, how embarrassing! Here, this is an open book, everyone knows who I am, and everyone knew I was going to have intimate visits!* Mariana.

Mariana describes prison as an "open book", meaning that prison represents a context where the boundaries between public and private domains collapse, since everyone (e.g., officers, managers and prisoners) knows when and under what conditions women will have intimate visits, therefore challenging the secrecy and privacy that is commonly associated with intimate interactions.

Besides the public awareness, prisoners also refer to the security measures carried out by external agents, as another element that impinges on the couple's interactions during intimate visits. In a context such as prison, characterized by organizational models of control, security concerns underpin all procedures (Craig, 2004). Thus, before and after each intimate visit, prisoners must be submitted to a full

strip search (Law 51/2011) in order to assure that offenders are not bringing into prison instruments that may constitute a threat to the security of the institution.

As Isabel shows, security procedures are generally well received by prisoners, who agree with them and consider that they are in for their own security; *I agree with doing the body inspection after the visit to check if they [men] bring us something from other prisons. I fully agree.* Isabel.

However, different perceptions emerge regarding the ways in which full strip search is enacted: according to the interviewed women, these procedures are usually carried out by female officers with indifference, in a demeaning way that objectifies the body, which commonly contributes to deepening feelings of humiliation, embarrassment and exposure among prisoners.

> *They make us go naked as Our Lord placed us in the world, before entering the room we "do squats here, do squats there". (...) They undress us all and then look at us idly. We feel bad [sigh] (...) I feel so ... oh, the first time I cried, cried and cried. When we go into the room, it seems as if we are already oppressed. And then, when we leave, they do it again, or even worse. I wanted to give up, but my husband asks me not to.* Isabel.

Intimate visits therefore show how prison systems, while adopting a policy of allowing and not repressing sexual activity, continue to exert power over sexuality through subtle and diffuse' strategic forms of power (Foucault, 1976), experienced in the discrete signs of institutional rituals and hierarchies, which control the most intimate areas of each individual (Foucault, 1999).

These kinds of interferences in the couple's interactions are another reason that lead some prisoners to reject intimate visits (Lima, 2006).

> *I guess I would not feel right having intimate visits in a prison. (...) It is not only the issue of invading my privacy, it isn't only for me, it is also for him [boyfriend]. He has never served time in prison. [To have intimate visits] he would have to come to prison to have sex with me? No. I think that a man, coming from the outside to have sex with a woman in prison does not make sense. I don't know, for me it doesn't make sense.* Sandra (aged 25, theft, 7 years).

As Sandra outlines, her partner has never been imprisoned, and therefore, she does not think it is fair to expose him to the specific mechanisms of penal monitoring

that challenge the intimacy of the couple, and extensively control the bodies and behaviour of both prisoners and non-prisoners.

Among women whose partners are also imprisoned, these particular issues regarding the invasion of privacy and the extension of correctional control are mitigated, although other concerns emerge. Prisoners report that, when both of the members of the couple are imprisoned, the procedures around full dress inspection are differently applied to men and women. Isabel acknowledges that women feel that they are unfairly subjected to a much more extensive and intrusive surveillance than their male partners:

> *To my husband they don't do anything, he doesn't let them do a body inspection! Because men are men. And we women, do everything they tell us to do, at least I do! When they [officers] go to my husband, they look at him and ....[show fear]. My husband says to the prison officers "do not touch me!" (...) If he comes from another prison to visit me, why do I have to take the whole body inspection and he doesn't? Do you think that's fair? My husband is not examined. And even if by any chance men are searched, it's like for a regular visit, they are searched over their clothes! It's not like us! No way! If they did it to men, men would beat them up! It's not fair!* Isabel.

These gender asymmetries are considered to be unreasonable and promote feelings of perceived injustice among female prisoners, which potentially undermine their willingness to continue to take part in this visitation programme, despite its recognized benefits for conjugal relationships.

Conclusion

Women's narratives report conflicting experiences regarding intimate visits, revealing an *ambivalent intimacy*. On the one hand, these moments promote a sense of closeness to their partners and foster feelings of freedom and privacy, in contrast with the noisy, crowded, and exposed nature of regular contacts with relatives and highly monitored prison routines. On the other hand, intimate visits increase more subtle forms of power that entail the most intrusive scrutiny of intimacy within imprisonment.

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Women's marital expectations and feminist activism in Morocco: Is this the same road?

Raquel Gil Carvalheira

Abstract
Feminists activists in Morocco continue to fight against laws they do consider to discriminate women. Legal equality is one of their major battles, but other claims are being made to integrate women in the economic and social development of the country. But how should women's wishes and aspirations be considered if they somehow do not always coincide with major feminist claims? The intense contact with women and families in Morocco showed me that women do not always pursue the same rights and responsibilities as men in certain areas of life, such as marriage. This paper addresses these questions through women's lives experiences from a Moroccan popular milieu.

Keywords: Morocco, Women, Family, Hierarchy.

Introduction

Rachida is 31 years old and runs a small shop of Moroccan crêpes (*mesemen*[15]), pancakes (*beghrīr*) and bread (*raīf*) in Essaouira, just below the apartment I rented for my stay in the city. In front of a heated plate, she prepares crêpes as she sells them to a crowd of people who pile up in the late afternoon, as they go home to eat the *casse crôte* (from the French), the sugary snack of Moroccan families. In the dark back of the store, several women knead the crêpes while Rachida friendlily serves customers. Maryam is her best friend and they live together. While Rachida is divorced, Maryam is unmarried; she helps her friend out on her days off or special days, when there is a large amount of work. Maryam works as a cook in a hotel in Sidi Kaouki[16] and, unlike the other women at the store, she speaks fluent French. At the age of thirty, Maryam is a spinster. She told me in a funny way that in Morocco, if a woman is not married by thirty, people think she has some sort of a problem. She argues that she has not yet found the right man. When she gets married, Maryam told me she wants to stop working and dedicate herself exclusively to the new household. So I asked her, 'but don't you like your job?', 'Yes I do', she answered, 'but I want a husband who is rich enough to allow me to stay home, so I don't have to work and take care of our home at the same time. I want to dedicate myself to him, to the house and our children,'

[15]. I have in general followed the conventions of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* for transliteration. Many terms are specific to Moroccan dialect; in these cases I decided how to transliterate colloquial terms as I have attempted to follow the local pronunciation. *'e'* used as a very short form of the 'a' , as in word 'about', 'g' is pronounced as the 'g' as in word 'go'. Some words are kept in common English forms as Mudawwana. Place names are written according to French orthography used in Morocco, like Essaouira and Sidi Kaouki.
[16]. Touristic destination near Essaouira

During the year I lived in Essaouira (between October 2010 and March 2012)[17], I met quite a few women, some with stable jobs and university graduations, who shared these views on life after marriage. Many had left their professional life willing to dedicate themselves to the new conjugal unit, and argued that children needed them at home. I also met women who refused several marriage proposals for the inverse reasons, because their grooms wished they stopped working after marriage or radically changed their lives, something they did not want to do. But marriage is seen as major event in people's lives, entailing structural changes for both spouses. These changes are thought of differently for men and women, and commonly justified in terms of gender differences.

Morocco is a country with a Muslim tradition and a monarchy legitimized by the *Sherifian* descent of the king (*malik*), the *Amīr Al Mūminīn*, "Commander of the Faithful". Religious and political powers are tightly intertwined. However, Morocco is also a country whose history, geographical proximity and economic dependence on Europe produced modernizing social policies, and these form part of a political discourse that emphasizes the democratic nature of the regime. This is the reason why human rights and women's emancipation discourses are particularly welcomed in Morocco.

The status of women has been an important debate in Moroccan society since the nineties. NGOs and feminist intellectuals advocated for legal, political and educational changes, while religious scholars (pl. *ulamā*) and organizations claimed that the complementary roles of men and women (not always equal in duties and rights) represent the true spirit of Muslim tradition, where family is the most basic social unit. This debate resulted in King Mohammed VI's proposal to change the Moroccan Family Law (Mudawwana) which was voted in Parliament in 2003.

I propose to look at the imbricated ways in which marriage is a site of conflicting ideas and practices, where gender is constantly being redefined. There is a diversity of expectations, desires and solutions concerning marriage that are central to men's and women's lives. To account for its importance, Moroccans often turn to a saying (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad: 'when a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion.'

The intense debate on women's condition in Muslim countries is frequently guided by assumptions which reinforce the submissive and restricted role they have in society, and family is seen as the main source of reproduction of these models. But women's discourses and opinions showed me that marriage is a necessary starting

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point to understand familiar dynamics and gender relations. In a gender segregated context, it was inevitable that women were my privileged interlocutors. Nevertheless, in order to analyse marriage instead of women's condition, I try to escape from a dichotomist bias that places women as submissive subjects and men as dominant ones, gender constructions assigned to the patriarchal nature of Muslim societies. I believe it is appropriate to ask whether women and men are not simultaneously submissive and dominant subjects in such contexts, where historical and social complexities cannot be reduced to the notion of patriarchy and understood as a simple reproduction of prescribed roles. This paper suggests some elements to discuss these issues.

To provide

Lubna had just finalized her divorce when I arrived in Essaouira. Her family comes from a nearby village; her father settled in the city and opened a small spices shop, which is now managed by one of her brothers. She currently lives with her daughter in a small room at her parents' apartment, in a family house her father built in a relatively poor area of the city. After getting married, Lubna moved to Casablanca, where her husband lived, and left her job as a hairdresser. She started wearing the headscarf and *jellābah*[18] she did not like it, but her husband expected her to do so. When she arrived in Casablanca she found out that her husband's promises — she had met him through a newspaper add — did not fit reality. He did not have the economic conditions to provide for both, so they shared a small apartment with two of his brothers, something that caused Lubna great discomfort.

He was a tailor but did not earn enough money, so Lubna gave him some of her marriage jewellery, gifts usually seen as a woman's property, so he could buy new fabrics. She got pregnant and asked her husband to return to Essaouira. She wanted to stay close to her mother and sister, who could help her after the child's birth. After a painful and silent waiting, close to delivery time, her husband finally allowed her to return to her parents' home. She delivered her daughter at the Essaouira hospital and it was her mother who paid for the medical expenses, as well as the extra money nurses usually ask for. According to Lubna, and although it was his duty, her husband did not pay for this. After this event, she decided not to return to Casablanca. Her husband and his parents visited her and tried to convince her to return. That day, and in the presence of everyone (both families), she stated that she wanted a divorce.

Lubna's story resonates with others I came to hear in Essaouria and show how the formation of a new family unit is frequently based on a shared expectation that

[18]. Traditionally used by both men and women in Morocco, the *jellābah* is a long garment with full sleeves and a hood. It has a loose, straight cut, which hides the body shape. However, some magazine models are tight-fitting, sensual and "modern", and young women prefer them.

economic responsibility is to be assumed by the man i.e., that he is the one who should provide for the new household: house, food and clothing for both women and children. On the other side, for women, married life means a structural change in their *material condition*. It means they accept to somewhat confine their movements in the public sphere — not only because they are expected to take care of the new household, but also in order to reduce their public exposure — and for example, to leave their jobs. It requires women to change their appearance, replacing their teen years' jeans and shirts for *jellābah*-s and headscarves, like it happened to Lubna. In many situations, women and men conceive of marriage in this way and they see these changes as a part of married life. Lubna's story is an example showing her acceptance of material changes but also her frustration when her husband was not, in her eyes, responsible enough.

The clash between reality and expectations is surely not restricted to Moroccan society, but what is somehow specific to this context is what people do expect, and how the notion of sacrifice in the name of marriage is embedded in gender conceptions. Lubna saw the use of *jellābah* and headscarf as a sacrifice she was willing to do; in the same way, she expected her husband to treat her well and be responsible for her. This does not mean that marriage is a simple transaction of "favours" between men and women. Moreover, conjugality implies a suspension of personal interests in the construction of common ones and these entail different roles. The morality of marriage relies on the ability to match these common interests, gender being a structural marker that validates different degrees of obedience and authority for both men and women. The husband's authority is often justified in terms of his greater exposure to the adversities of the world while he tries to provide for the family. The wife's obedience is the result of the relief from this burden, and one of its expressions is the change in her *material condition*, avoiding her exposure to other men. Until 2004, the Personal Status Code defined the husband as the decision-maker and the head of the couple. This came to be modified, partly thanks to the demands made by feminist NGOs and human rights activists.

In spite of these conceptions of marriage, husbands often have difficulty providing enough for their families. This is particularly the case among young men, and they do not always tell the whole truth about their economic situation to the girls and their families before marriage, and they nourish the hope of some business working out well, or of finding a well-paid job. Sometimes families do not accept to marry their daughter if they do not have a confirmation of the groom's economic ease and prefer a guarantee she will stay home and not have to work. According to the official 2011

Moroccan statistics[19], the unemployment rate is high among young (15-24 years old) in urban areas (32,2%), as opposed to only 8,6% in rural areas.

It is easier for women to find a job, not only because of the nature of the market, but also because their marginalization enables them to easily weave solidarity networks (cf. Mir-Hosseini 1993). So when husbands fail to assume their responsibilities as providers, it is common for women to do it. Many women I have met said they did not have any job, but I met many that were actually working. Among the less educated women, work does not signify emancipation or a better life quality. It is a necessity, imposed on them when husbands fail to provide. Among the low/low-middle classes, work is often informal, sporadic, extremely underpaid (cf. Ennaji 2008) and women are publicly exposed, having contact with men stranger to the family. This is seen as inappropriate for them. The feminization rate of employment in Moroccan urban context in 2007 was as follows: 24.9% of the female population is employed and, of those, 10.3% are self-employed or employers, 24.1% are apprentices or help their family and 42.8% have 'other status' (Royaume du Maroc 2008). Informal employment is difficult to quantify, but this 'other status' seems to refer to the amalgam of employment situations that characterize the lives of women of the Moroccan lower social stratus.

As they take economic responsibilities at home, the ideal role of man as the sole provider collapses. Marital disputes among the poor in Morocco arise through this clash between legal/ideal model and everyday life (cf. Mir-Hosseini, 1993). Similarly to what Mir-Hosseini (*idem*) examined in the courts of Rabat and Sale, violence and abandonment also emerge in the women's stories I came to know in Essaouira[20]. This situation represents a mismatch between what is conceived of as a socially valued model for couples and reality.

In Essaouira, and especially in the lower social stratus, a single person's income is not enough to provide for a family with several children. In this Atlantic coastal city, the main economic activities suffer from stagnation: industry is virtually non-existent, the fishing harbour is rudimentary, and tourism is subject to large annual fluctuations of the number of visitors. The surrounding agricultural region underwent two decades of major drought, and many families migrated to the city in search of a better life, which they did not always find. In these circumstances, husbands feel unable to guarantee what marriage entails.

It is clear that marital conflicts cannot be solely attributed to economic difficulties. However, situations of major economic difficulties highlight the relevance

[19] Royaume du Maroc 2011 : http://www.hcp.ma/downloads/Activite-emploi-et-chomage-resultats-detailles_t13039.html

[20] Research was also conducted in a women's association in Essaouira which legally and medically supports women who are victims of domestic violence. Many conclusions on this article rely on interviews and on a daily interaction with these women, frequently coming from lower social stratus.

of these ideals and expectations. As we could see with Maryam's story at the beginning of this paper, or with Lubna's, women's expectations about marriage often imply a division of tasks, that men should be able to provide for the family while women should manage the household and change their public exposure. Marriage implies a hierarchical relationship within the couple which is constructed around the idea of common interests. But decisions inside the conjugal unity are also entangled with other types of family dynamics.

Personal choices and other people's decisions: age and gender

Moroccan society oscillates between a culture of obedience and a culture of dissent, and is therefore characterized by an ambivalence of behaviours (between submission and rebellion) and a reversal of positions (from subordination to domination) (cf. Hammoudi 1997). This culture is historically organized around a hierarchical structure where charisma and religious language play a structural role. Authors like Abdellah Hammoudi (1997), Mohamed Tozy (1999) and John Waterbury (1970) focus their work on this culture's expression in the formation of the Moroccan political reality and monarchy, and they particularly emphasize the resource control mechanisms by the *Makhzen*[21] elites.

These principles are not confined to the reality of the palace's political and economic elites, as they are rather part of the Moroccan attitudes towards life. The extended family is also a site where notions of obedience and dissidence find their expression, being frequently organized around gender and age. Hierarchical relations are not immutable. In families, they are highly dependent on people's life cycle, aging meaning an upgrade. Two situations show hierarchy being contested among young women: the first is related to the relationship between daughter and mother-in-law, and raises questions on patrilocality. The second arises from the choice of marriage, as many young women would like to refuse their father's or brother's proposals.

Mothers-in-law's authority is based on age. Young women must accommodate themselves to the new family, accepting to be submissive to mothers-in-law and nourishing the hope that time will change the balance of power, and she will acquire the social status that marriage, offspring and household organization brings. Women's social status is highly dependent on choosing a 'good' marriage, and having children establishes them as an adult woman. Patience with her husband and subtlety are valued attributes on women. I've often heard women talking about patience and subtlety as a way of not confronting their husbands' authority and dealing with

[21] *Makhzen* designated the government established by the Saadian dynasty. The sultan applied the Islamic Law and collected taxes as he guaranteed safety to populations under his rule (cf. Sourdel & Sourdel 1996). Nowadays, *Makhzen* defines the political and economic elites of the royal palace, a powerful non-official system that pervades formal institutions.

conjugal problems. Subtle strategies are used to avoid disrupting the equilibrium established by expected roles. Keeping the house clean and do good food are essential requirements. Although an uncommon practice nowadays, people told me the mother-in-law used to ask the recently newlywed girl to cook a fish *ājīne*[22] the day after the wedding. Given the preference Moroccans have for meat, this particularly difficult dish would ascertain the young girl's cooking skills. The tendency to evaluate the young newlywed girl becomes especially conflictive when mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law live together, or in the nearby.

Women often complain not only of violence from their husbands, but also from their mothers-in-law. Many decided to divorce because they could not bear the lack of support and constant depreciation directed to them. Hildred Geertz (1979) states in her study of the Aldun neighbourhood (*derb*) in Sefrou, that although virilocality is a preference, it is avoided due to disputes between wives and mothers-in-law. Soraya Altorki (1986), who studied the elite women in Saudi Arabia, claims that the new generation prefers a neolocal type of residence after marriage and hopes this will bring independence from the extended family.

In Morocco it is common that women after marriage will reside near their families-in-law while the reverse is rare. It might happens when woman's family is richer and enjoys a higher social status than the husband's, but among the popular classes this option is seen as damaging the man's reputation. Women often accept a residence shared with families-in-law, but hope their husbands' will save enough money to build a separate household. Setting up a new household displays a wish for the autonomy of the new conjugal unit; financial autonomy on the husband's side and home organization on the woman's side. Moroccan statistics indicate a growing trend towards nuclear households, rather than complex units, which are characterized as traditional (Royame du Maroc 1998). But buildings often congregate extended families and each apartment/ floor corresponding to a conjugal unit. This defies traditional statistical analysis, since the nuclear household is kept in proximity to the extended family. Such an option mitigates financial expenses while maintaining the bonds with the extended family, so much valued by Moroccans. Solutions like these also avoid an intense contact between mothers and daughters-in-law, while maintaining some sort of social control.

On the other hand, as some people told me, many marriages do not go well because families do not always make enough efforts in order to find out the suitor's true circumstances and the other family's backgrounds. Marrying a daughter is urgent when families have economic difficulties in sustaining several children, and the viability of the new conjugal project is not always taken into due consideration. Marriages

[22] Stew crock pot made up of two parts, a base and a lid in conical shape, the name which designating's the dishes cooked in it.

chosen by the parents do not always respect personal wishes (particularly of women), but in most cases the decision is accepted. Several of the women I spoke to married according with their parents' choice, and did not feel they were forced to do so. However, while still unmarried, many expect their marriage will be based on love, and therefore a reflection of a personal choice. It is true that aspiring to a marriage based on romantic love has for a long time been a part of Moroccan social imagery, but only recently it has been perceived as having some weigh in marriage choices. Young girls I interviewed divorced their husbands some months after their marriage and appointed to the lack of personal choice as one of the reasons for their conjugal problems.

Conclusion

A considerable part of the sociological literature on gender produced in Morocco has been chiefly concerned with women's social and economic barriers to empowerment in the public sphere, especially in terms of rights. This literature tends to focus on a wider legal, political, economic and social reality (El Ayadi 2002; Ennaji 2008, 2011; Sadiqi n.d, 2008), outlining the general features of women's status in Morocco. The underlying political agenda tends to cite the transformations in Moroccan society, between past trajectories and present and future policies. Increasing urbanization, schooling, women's entry into the work market, rural-urban migration, emigration and, tourism are social transformations that have been forging new configurations in Moroccan society since its independence, in 1956. They brought about new expectations regarding gender relations. Although these approaches are useful to understand gender relations in Morocco, notably its naturalization and the unequal rights between men and women, other important dimensions, like the motivational ones, are not fully taken into account. These are sometimes perceived as reminiscent of traditional mentalities and the result of high rates of illiteracy.

Family structures and relations are constantly being redefined, they are not fixed set of roles ascribed and to which people respond. People activate social morals and values and at the same time they try to find ways to respond to their personal wishes and expectations. Women's and men's views on family are changing and accommodate other values, as autonomy and personal choice, but this not mean that gender roles or other family hierarchical relations are being contested. These are often expressed through care, love and protection or even teaching and learning. They are not always perceived as power relations. When feminists claim equality as a necessary (and legal) requisite for the family in Morocco, they are trying to introduce a debate and values that are not always consistent with what people expect and how they conceive family's life.

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BDSM in Italy: analyzing stereotypes about gender, sexuality and the body

Laura Zambelli

Abstract
This paper deals with the analysis of the main stereotypes about gender, sexuality and the body in the BDSM Italian scene. With BDSM we intend all the practices dealing with Bondage, Domination and Submission/Discipline and Sadomasochism. In this paper I will present some theoretical reflections and partial empirical findings from my doctoral research. I relied on qualitative methods, mainly ethnographies and in-depth interviews, to conduct the research. My aim is to present how stereotypes about gender, sex and the body – key aspects of BDSM – are constructed and enacted within the scene, and explore whether and to which extent they challenge, deconstruct or reproduce the main stereotypes in society. Consent is central to BDSM play, since it differentiates these practices from paraphilia (APA 2013). Practitioners are used to negotiate scene, roles and practices before the session takes place. Given the importance of consent and negotiation in BDSM play, I want to investigate if these attitudes are reflected on the deconstruction or challenge of main stereotypes by BDSM practitioners. The importance of the subject and his/her social network in this process of choice is highlighted by empirical data, collected during ethnographies and interviews. Nevertheless, binarism with regards to gender roles, sexual orientation and roles during play is persistent.

Keywords: BDSM, stereotypes, gender, sex, body, consent.

Introduction

In this paper, my aim is to present some empirical findings and theoretical reflections from my doctoral research about BDSM. The research is focused on BDSM groups and communities in Milan, Italy. BDSM is the acronym for Bondage, Domination and Submission/Discipline and Sadomasochism; this category groups several practices, from spanking to sensory deprivation. In this paper I want to discuss some reflections and findings related to stereotypes about gender, sexuality and the body, central concepts when approaching BDSM. First of all, I will show how gender, sexuality and the body are presented and constructed within the scene. Then, I will discuss to which extent these conceptions could be considered challenging or reproducing the main social stereotypes about gender, sexuality and the body in Italy.

Focusing on the phenomenon of BDSM

BDSM is an umbrella term grouping practices dealing with bondage, domination and submission, discipline and sadomasochism. These practices share some basic features (Moser and Kleinplatz 2006):

- sexual context
- appearance of domination and submission
- consensuality
- role playing
- mutual definition

BDSM practices happen in a sexual context, that is, they are often defined as sexual practices. Not all the practitioners interviewed agree with this statement: we have to assess the role of socio-cultural processes to which the individual is socialized in influencing what we perceive to be sexual (Laumann et al. 1994). Secondly, these practices show an appearance of domination and submission of the participants involved. The submissive individual is also called sub, bottom, or slave; the dominant is also called top, dom or master/mistress; different nouns underline different aspects of the relationship. Consensuality between or among participants seems to be one of the two elements that differentiates BDSM from a paraphilia (APA 2013). Consensuality is also part of the widespread slogan about BDSM: safe, sane and consensual[23]. Role playing refers to the fact that these activities are in some ways enacted or played in specific contexts. Finally, all the participants share the awareness that what they are doing are BDSM practices.

I would like to include among these features that mark BDSM practices the importance of a community of reference for the subjects. Practitioners usually have a reference community/group; it could be online – a forum, a website, a mailing list – or offline – a group of practitioners they frequent and hang out with. This group/community serves the purpose to socialize and learn the key aspects of BDSM – discussing topics, organizing parties, finding a play partner. The reputation of a play partner could be acquired relying on these networks.

[23] SSC (Safe, Sane and Consensual) is usually opposed to RACK (Risk-Aware Consensual Kink); safe refers to the fact that participants have to prevent risks to health, sane refers to the balanced state of mind and consensual to the necessary consent of all the participants involved.

As regards the diffusion of these practices among the population, it is difficult to construct statistics due to the blurred definition of BDSM. Nevertheless, we want to report some of them, showing the differences in the practices accounted by authors. Kinsey et al. (1953) discovered that in US 11% of men and 17% of women reported trying bondage; Petersen (1983) found that 5-10% of US population engages in SM at least on occasional basis. For Janus and Janus (1993) 11% of women and 14% of men have had some sexual experience with sadomasochism. Other estimations refer to BDSM played in USA and EU on a regular basis from 5-10% of the population (Masters et al. 1985, 1995; Reinisch 1990; Weinberg 1995; APA 2000; Gross 2006). Richters et al. (2008) reported that the previous year 2,2% of men and 1,3% of women in Australia had been involved in BDSM.

As said, statistics differ in acquiring for the activities and the geographical area.

A brief introduction to the research project

The research project focuses on BDSM and has three levels of analysis strictly interconnected. The first level is the individual, or the subject, as I prefer to call it. I investigate the subject's emotions, personal history, attitudes and behaviours about BDSM. Then, the meso-level, that is the step focused on the groups subjects are part of. Usually the same subject belongs to more than one group; it is interesting to note the overlapping of these groups; thus, it is possible to trace the network of interactions of a subject, identifying nodes in the network and their functions. Finally, we have the macro-level, corresponding to society: my aim is to analyse the changes in sexual attitudes and behaviours since the Sexual Revolution in Western societies; the study of BDSM will be thus contextualized in a broader frame.

Methods

I rely on qualitative methods and approaches to conduct my research, mainly ethnographies and in-depth interviews. Ethnographies are conducted during play parties and munches that take place in Milan. Furthermore, I interview BDSM practitioners or key informant in Northern Italy. Focusing on the context of Milan allowed to access one of the Italian cities in which the BDSM scene is most developed and widespread. There are several clubs and events BDSM-themed that take place in

the city. One of the most famous BDSM-themed social network has in Milan a sort of local branch that periodically organizes munches, that is gatherings during which BDSM practitioners, newbies and sympathizers could meet and socialise.

In-depth interviews are conducted face to face focusing on specific topics, that remain constant, rather than on a fixed scheme of questions. Nevertheless, the relative openness of the interview outline allows adjusting the direction if needed.

Finally, I use internet and the social media to seek events in the nearby and find people to contact.

Testing the general hypothesis

In this article I want to discuss the following hypothesis: consent is central in BDSM if we consider the importance of SSC, which differentiates BDSM from a paraphilia (APA 2013). To give consent, a prior agreement between the participants is needed, thus the importance of the negotiation before the session. In countries different from Italy, especially US, BDSMer put an emphasis on the moment of the negotiation: sometimes even a formal and written contract displaying all the practices to which participants agree or don't agree is signed. As said, in Italy the situation is quite different: usually people observe how the potential partner play and speak with him/her about their preferences, also relying on some common acquaintances to have information – at least in public or semi-public occasions.

Given the importance of consent and negotiation I argue that there is the possibility for practitioners to negotiate scenes that allow to challenge and deconstruct mainstream stereotypes about gender, sex and the body. At the same time, nevertheless, the possibility for this deconstruction does not mean that it will be realized: the scene enacted could perfectly fit the idea of the beautiful-submissive-woman and the dominant-macho-man. My aim is to discuss whether and to which extent mainstream stereotypes are played upon and altered by practitioners.

In the next session I will discuss the main conceptualizations of gender, sexuality and the body enacted and presented by practitioners during sessions and interviews.

The analysis of stereotypes

The analysis of the stereotypes relies both on direct observations conducted during ethnographies and on information obtained from interviews.

Gender

In this paper, for convenience reasons, under the category of gender – rather broad and encompassing – follow different elements: gender identity, sexual orientation, roles during the session and use of clothes and accessories; all these aspects are strictly intertwined.

The extended majority of the subjects interviewed or observed assume the gender identity in conformity with their biological sex, which is the one identified by their genital configuration. Nevertheless, I encountered some men that dressed up as female during the sessions; for the majority of them, the female identity existed also outside the sessions: they assumed a female gender identity in other frames of their lives; we should talk about transgender people. Women that dressed up as men during sessions did it with different premises: it is part of their dress code or role set up for the occasion; their gender identity remains female. As well as outside the sessions, it is the minority of men and women that assume a gender identity different from their sex. In this sense, the BDSM scene reflects the configuration of the wider social reality in which it is embedded.

Another aspect related to gender identity is a particular practice, the "feminization": it consists of men that undergo – ordered by their play partner, usually – a process of modification of attitudes, choice of dress, and mimicry that get them closer to the female gender. Although it is a consensual practice, since it takes place in a consensual play, it is enacted in a punitive frame: we can assimilate it to a punishment, a degradation, thus carrying negative meanings.

The choice of clothes is part of one element always present in BDSM play parties: the dress code. Attending a public – or semi-public – play party requires a dress code: it could be fetish, dark, military, sexy and so on. Its function is to help participants getting in the mood for play and also to distinguish the time of play from the ordinary time of everyday life. Like the carnival, it is also an occasion to show themselves off, or to cover up.

These reflections take us to consider the performativity inherent to the BDSM scene. Performativity is intended in different ways. First of all, the act of play – be it a session with the whip or a clinical one – takes place in front of several people that can be assimilated to an audience. Secondly, the dress code, usually mandatory, is like a costume actors wear. Thirdly, we can consider roles and identities following the concept of performance of – among others – Judith Butler (1990). The performativity, in all the three aspects, allows altering and deconstructing the main social stereotypes about gender identity, roles and code of behaviour. At the same time, although, it can confirm and replicate them; it is left to the subjects to choose.

As regards the sexual orientation, it seems to be fluid, with the majority of females – rather than males – having or having had homosexual experiences as well as heterosexual ones. Considering the BDSM-themed social network I know – internationally widespread and grouping several subjects I met – this configuration is confirmed: there are many women that on their profile state they are “heteroflexible”. During sessions it is rarer to see men kissing or even playing with each other rather than women. Considering sexual orientation, the scene and the framework emerging from interviews reflect the main social configuration about sexual orientation: homosexuality or bisexuality regards the minority of people. It is interesting to note the almost total absence of male homosexuals from the parties attended: they seem to attend other parties at other clubs. The social segregation existing between homosexuals and heterosexuals is quite clear in the context examined.

The last element I want to consider in this section is the importance of the roles enacted during play parties or private sessions. The role a person has is a relational characteristic that implies to play with another person. As said before, there are mainly three roles in the scene: the sub – with the relative synonyms, the dom, idem as above mentioned, and the switch, a combination of the two. Practitioners usually enact and talk as if they have a fixed role over time: “I am a master”, “I am a slave” are quite common sentences. Independently from the person they face, they assume the role they think they fit in. Other individuals instead declare they are switch: their role depends from the interaction with the person they confront with. They do not think there is a fixed nature inside every practitioner, but they believe the role should and

could be constructed during the interaction; we could talk about "essentialists" and "constructionists" BDSM practitioners, to use two ideal categories.

Sex

Describing BDSM as a collection of sexual practices is not obvious. Although Moser and Kleinplatz (2006) inscribe BDSM within the realm of sexual practices, empirical evidence showed that not all the practitioners agree with them. For some BDSMer, BDSM has nothing to do with sex; we have to account the role of the socio-cultural processes in shaping our perceptions of sex: what is sex is thus culturally and socially defined (Laumann et al., 1994). Among the practitioners I interviewed, only the minority thought that BDSM is not a sexual activity.

For those who think that BDSM is a particular sexual practice the reasons for this are several. First of all, BDSM could be intended as foreplay: it sexually arouses the participants, leading to sexual intercourse.

For others, BDSM is mixed with sex since it makes it rougher and more intense. Bites, spanks, light bondage could be part of a sexual intercourse.

The differences between BDSM and traditional – or "vanilla" – sex are quite blurred. Practitioners and authors spoke about traditional sex in a non definitional way, taking it for granted but anyway assuming a difference. Some practitioners do have "vanilla" sex in their present lifetime as well as BDSM sexual encounters; others think about non-BDSMer as people that are missing quite a lot in terms of emotions, sensations and experiences. In this case, BDSM is seen as a possibility to expand self-perceptions and limits.

A high interest in polyamory was an element I did not expect to emerge from the field and the interviews. Polyamory describes the existence of multiple and consensual relationship among individuals. Forms of these multiple relationships are different: from a primary relationship between two people and secondary relationships with other people to the triangle, involving three people at the same level of sharing. Several people I spoke with are currently in polyamorous relationships, while others are taking information about it from books, blogs, groups, etc. The main reason is that they want to overcome the jealousy inherent in the couple

by opening up it and have the mean to control, by negotiating, who and when they frequent.

The idea of fidelity within polyamory consists in negotiating some limits between the primary couple or among the participants, both in terms of time dedicated to and practices allowed with different partners. The aim is either protect the primary relationship or share the same amount of time and energy among the participants, leaving nobody excluded.

Polyamory appears to be widespread within the different groups, involving also people who are not practising it but are getting informed. BDSM practitioners are used to negotiate plays and scenes, and so it could be that this ability is used in negotiating the terms of polyamory – settings, dates, limits and so on.

Sex in Clubs

Sexual activities in clubs – penetration, masturbation, oral sex and so on – deserve a separate analysis. I observed its almost total absence. There is no formal restriction about sexual intercourse, oral sex and masturbation, but they are not the main purpose of the gatherings. Usually, people attending BDSM play parties have the means and the possibility to have sex at their own home, so they probably prefer not to share this activity with others. Furthermore, playing in front of other people make the sessions like a theatrical performance, with its rules and rites. This makes the performance more formal and less visible some attitudes and behaviours that are rather private.

Another possible explanation for the absence of sexual intercourse is the non necessity of it, since BDSM practices allow the secretion of endorphins in the body, as happens during sexual intercourse.

The Body

The body of the participants involved in these practices is central in understanding BDSM itself. In fact, the body is both the mean through which these practices are lived and enacted and the product of them. It is through the alteration, the solicitation, the punishment of the body that these practices take place. Also the ones that are defined as “mental” – e.g. “mental bondage”, “mental domination” –

involve the body by the mean of discipline. Furthermore, the body is the product of BDSM practices since it carries the signs of it. Signs could be caused by scratches, piercing, branding, spanking, etc.

Usually the subject is proud of these signs, since they constitute the visible proof of his/her activity, resistance and remind him/her the session just played. Nevertheless, for other practitioners, less open as BDSMer in their private life, signs have to not to be left, or at least to be hidden. Friends and partners are not always informed about their preferences, and they are eventually to be kept out of the secret.

Strictly related to body signs is the element of pain, present in BDSM practices but rarely named by participants. Some practitioners, asked whether they perceive pain during some BDSM practices, answered that they know that that sensation was pain, but did not perceived it as such; it is so strictly linked with pleasure that it is experienced as pleasurable.

Pain should be administered with caution and following some rules: preparation to receive it, progression and rhythm. The “sub space” is the mental condition of the dominated BDSMer that is able to bear a more intense amount of pain since he/she has been prepared mentally and accompanied progressively by an increasing rhythmic pain. Traditionally, also different techniques used to reach the ecstasy involve a particular rhythm (Schneider 2009). This happens during sessions; in the everyday life, pain regains its mean: it is a signal that our body gives us, warning to stop the dangerous activity we are involved in.

As regards the body shape – weight, complexion, etc. – the stereotypical tall-slim-and-good-looking body is challenged in BDSM frame. The bodies are very different from one another, and not exclusively tall, slim and toned. There are several cases of obesity and overweight people. Non-normative body as well as normative ones are showed in their total or partial nudity without embarrassment. Also comments about the physical appearance are quite absent from the discourses. Some people – insider or outsider – think that the explication for this is self-evident: people unable to have sexual experiences due to their non-normative body could find here a space in which they are accepted and welcome, due to fewer prerequisites necessary to enter the scene.

Anyway, bodies are shown and voyeurism is allowed and not socially sanctioned. It is common to see people sitting and chatting while observing a whip session going on in the centre of the club.

An important part of BDSM related to the body is constituted by the infinite number of tools that could be used on it during a session. These tools – candles, ropes, needles, whips, handcuffs, etc. – require skills to be handled properly. Indeed, there are several privately organised workshops about the use of them. Usually, the skills are acquired through an older or more skilled member of the group, which explains how to use them properly. These connections among BDSMer are useful for the purpose of social innovation: it happens that some members learn new skills – e.g. play with fire – and teach them to the other interested.

In this respect, several people test on themselves the tools they are going to use on others before doing it. They do this to be aware of the sensations – pain, pleasure, constraint and other possible effects – their partner is going to feel. It is said that a good top has to be a sub first, that is, he/she has to know before playing the possible effects of the tools or technique used.

A skill taken in high consideration is the protection from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), since body fluids could be exchanged. Sometimes club owners provide condoms, gloves, dental dams and disinfectant.

Conclusions

In this article I presented some partial empirical findings of my doctoral research. Some main characteristics of BDSM involving gender, sex and the body are described with the use of empirical data deriving from ethnographies and interviews. Under the category of gender I grouped several topics, from gender identity to clothes and roles. Under the topic of sex, I discussed whether and to which extent BDSM could be considered a sexual practice. The last section of the empirical analysis regarded the body, seen as a mean through which BDSM practices are carried on and a result of them.

I presented the main stereotypes – internally and externally perceived – as regards gender, sex and the body, and tried to explain how they are lived and challenged through the negotiation process.

BDSM practices allow people, used to negotiate limits and practices, to challenge dominant conceptions about roles both during sessions and in everyday life, their gender identity, limits and so on. It is indeed left to the individual and the group the choice to deconstruct or reproduce them.

Anyway, it seems that binarism – in different forms – persists in the scene. The general spatial division among heterosexual and homosexuals, and the preference for static roles, either top or sub, rather than dynamic ones, are examples of this binarism. It is often stated that BDSM is a challenge to traditional stereotypes and a mean of liberation (Pat Califia, various). I think that these possibilities exist, but it is left to the individual and the group she/he is in, given the importance of the social network in influencing our behaviours and attitudes, to convey and experiment different ways of relating to one another.

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To be a 'Travesti' is Questioning the (almost) Unquestionable: Gender as a social Construction Process

Nélson Ramalho

Abstract
Gender is a social construction process based on strategies of power and domination. Normalization of gender expression through the prism of binary 'male' vs. 'female', not only hampers but masks the understanding of people who "violate" the social norms of gender, resulting in an oppressive process. Therefore, transgender people are systematically marginalized by discourses, institutions and policies that lead them to live of social vulnerability (Monro, 2005; Namaste, 2000). Direct observation in the context of sex work performed by 'travesti' people, especially in the area around 'Conde de Redondo', in Lisbon, over 16 months, has allowed us to understand that sex work, besides being a way of economic survival is also a form of construction of their social identity. It is through sex work that they learn that their sexual organs are sources of pleasure and desire. Unlike transsexuals, which often desire to remove their genitalia, seen often as a source of disgust, the 'travesti' may eventually challenge gender binarism, by questioning the traditional categories of 'male' and 'female', 'man' and 'woman'. Despite living with a feminine appearance (breast enlargement, hips, thighs and buttocks), by body modifications through hormone ingestion and silicone application, travestis do not want, nor claim to 'be' women. This allows breaking the supposed 'irreversible' subjection of bodies to a supposed biologic order (Butler, 1999), thus exposing the complexity of gendered self-definition processes.

Keywords: Sex, Gender, 'Travesti', Transsexuals.

Introdution

This paper is an initial reflexion on gender as a social construction process while dealing with transgender sex workers' lives. The results presented are based in *interviews* and *direct observation,* conducted over the past 16 months as part of my PhD research. These results focus on the discourses and practices of *travestis* working as street prostitutes in Lisbon. During my ongoing fieldwork I interacted with individuals who had never taken hormones or applied silicone for bodily transformation, but who used female names and attire. I also interacted with people who, while keeping their penises, presented an overall female body figure – the result of silicone application and surgical interventions, besides attire.

Both groups use the expression *travesti* to identify themselves – it is their word. Also, they are immersed in the prostitution milieu and adopt the language and ethos of the streets

We are speaking of people who were previously men (and sometimes still are when outside of prostitution contexts and when bearing no obvious body

feminization), but whose identity, subjectivity and body is guided towards what is socio-culturally perceived as feminine or womanly.

Construction of "Unquestionable" Gender

I depart from a perspective that stresses that both "sex" and "gender" are socially constructed categorizations, in line with third wave feminism and queer theory. "Sex" was categorized by the biomedical sciences in order to define and normalize 'man' and 'woman', doing so through a simplistic, dichotomous and binary understanding of complex and fluid biological characteristics (and considering an abnormality and deviation anything that breached the supposed gap between the opposite sexes, such as in the case of *intersex* people). Today[24], "sex" has become a fixed category and it is thought of in exclusively binary terms (man versus women).

The concept of "gender" was also developed by bio-medicine and psycho-therapy during the invention of the transsexual pathological category in the 1950's, distinguishing between, if you will, "biological sex" and "psychological and social sex".

The concept of gender, with its possibilities for de-naturalizing supposed sex differences, was eventually taken up by second wave feminism, as it allowed a historical explanation of women's subordination and masculine domination.

In dominant cultural narratives and categories, "biological sex" is matched to "social gender" and people are grouped into binary and opposed ontological categories, with a supposedly rigid differentiation of identities, roles, practices and social expectations. This institutional scheme is so deeply rooted in western societies, that it is viewed as natural and normal, and all situations and individuals who do not conform are viewed as deviants or sick. As such, thinking and living outside of this binary sex/gender system is (nearly) impossible.

This social construction of gender is structured on principles of *hegemonic masculinity* (Almeida, 1995) and *heteronormative* sexuality (Butler, 1999), for which "biological sex", "gender identity" and "sexual identity" must coincide. This gender

[24] In pre-modern times human sexed bodies and sexuality was not conceived as binary in the West. This specific type of gender difference appears in the 18th and 19th centuries. Until the 18th century a *one sex model* was predominant, in which 'man' was considered the pinnacle of perfection. A woman was considered like a lesser and bodily inverted man. The *model of two sexes*, as we know today, was established as a result of a bourgeois, capitalist and industrial society (Laqueur, 1996 *cited by* Souza and Carrieri, 2010).

order (sex / gender / sexuality) is a classificatory scheme, which creates the illusion of a 'natural norm' of human life (cisexuality and heterosexuality), as well as central types of deviance:

Table 1 | Gender Order Concept

	Gender order	Gender disorder
Biological Sex	Men/Women	Eg. Intersex
Gender	Male/Female	Eg. Transsexual/Transgender
Sexuality	Heterosexuality	Eg. Homosexuality

Individuals and practices involving any "deviation" (thought of as deviance) to this established order are considered "freaks" or "disorders", and its protagonists end up being considered ill (requiring correction) and included in the territory of the "abnormal" (Foucault, 2007 [1974-1075]). They suffer oppressive marginalization processes, by the dominant discourses, institutions and policies, which result in their social vulnerability (Monro, 2005; Namaste, 2000). The whole gender order results from strategies of power and domination (Bourdieu, 1999), and is socially imposed through discourse and language (Butler, 1999), grounded in different legal, educational, religious or psychiatric devices (Foucault, 1994 [1976]). Butler (1999) argues that identity construction is commonly viewed as a natural process because of our language, specifically in the need to name things, people, or processes[25]. Language supports the binary construction of masculine or feminine subjects, through repetition in time, speech and actions. This repetition reinforces the idea that this is a natural phenomenon[26]. Hence the concept of “abject bodies” (Butler, 1993), referring to “all kinds of bodies whose lives are not considered to be ‘lives’ and whose materiality is understood not to ‘matter’” (Prins & Meijer, 2002, p. 281). For Butler the non-recognition of the legitimate existence of a certain kind of bodies and sexualities becomes ethically inconceivable. As she states “the abjection of certain kinds of bodies, their inadmissibility to codes of intelligibility, does make itself known in policy

[25] As an example, even before being born a babe is transformed into a “she” or a “he” when we say “it’s a girl/boy”.

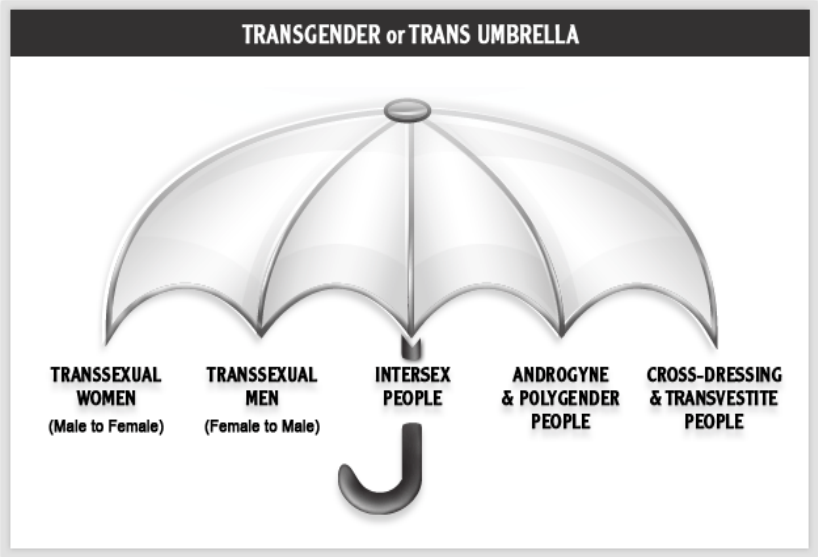
[26] Butler (1999) connects normative gender to normative sexuality. She raises the question on how the monitoring of gender norms is used to consolidate heterosexual hegemony. Foucault (1994 [1976]) names this monitoring of the norms, techniques and practices that induce people to assume certain behaviors without questioning them, as “technologies of the self”.

and politics, and to live as such a body in the world is to live in the shadowy regions of ontology" (Prins & Meijer, 2002, p. 277).

Transgender people are part of this collective of "abject bodies" because they present "inconsistencies" in face of the gender order. According to Whittle (2000) transgender are people whose identity or gender expression is not according to traditional social norms that define what is a man and a woman because they: 1) live according to the norms of the "opposite sex" (full / part-time) or; 2) do not live in any gender category or; 3) live in two gender categories.

Today transgender has become an umbrella term, which covers many different types of people who are part of a community that suffers oppression because of their gender identity or gender presentation.

Figure 1 | Transgender Umbrella



www.scottishtrans.org

There's a plurality of gender variations, which may include transsexual men and transsexual women (operated, or not), intersex people, androgynous people, *cross-dressers*, *drag queens / drag kings...* And *travestis*. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Departing from such a framework, and drawing from my fieldwork, we can ask in which manner are travestis destabilizing and deconstructing a binary gender order, or, in opposition, reinforcing the normative power of male and female categorizations?

Being 'Travesti': an expression of fluid gender?

'Travestis' are part of a group that does not fit on a predefined gender order because they present performances and subjectivities that do not maintain a normalized, stable and coherent relation between sex / gender / sexuality. As an example, we can see that some of them use feminine artefacts.

> *I like make up, I like props, I like necklines, I like tight pants, you see? I like earrings, I like-I think (...) I just see myself as a woman.*
>
> (Interview with Catharine, day 14.03.2012)

> *I am the man-woman. I am a werewolf. During the day I have a face, at night I have another. During the day 'macho' and in the evening 'Cinderella' who gets in front of the mirror and spends an hour there's a 'cat' ready to raze*
>
> (Interview with Milan, day 02/17/2013)

This destabilization of binary gender is also performed when bodily feminization (face, breasts, buttocks, etc.) is not accompanied by genital alteration. Unlike textbook 'transsexuals', who wish to remove them as source of disgust (the bodily symbol of a 'wrong' sex in face of a 'correct' gender identity), 'travestis' portray a strong desire to keep their penises, not only because they are a source of prostitution clients (and therefore a 'working tool'), but also as a source of individual pleasure.

> *When I started, I did not even like to touch me "in the front". I felt a woman. My head was female. As time passes, we will change because my life changed. Even sexually it changes. Imagine if, at the time (...) I'm feeling woman tsha (exemplifying castration). And now? (...) What I would do with my life? Are you Crazy!*
>
> (Field Journal, 28.04.2012)

> *(...) With time we learn to live with what we have between the legs. Thankfully I did not do it. Imagine if you had done? How would it be now? I could not be able to masturbate myself witch I like so much!*
>
> (Field Journal, 21.12.2012)

Prostitution becomes an important social space to freely express their femininity. Although prostitution has been almost the only way available for economic survival, eventually they discover that the streets may also be a context for the performance of the desired gender identity, even its show and histrionics, almost in a

camp fashion.

It is based on the incorporation of the feminine, through clothes, accessories, hair removal, intake of hormones, silicone application, etc., that these 'men' express an ambiguity of gender, producing a wide transgression of the symbolic, aesthetic, cultural and political order.

For Butler (1999), the repetition of these acts breaks the order, destabilizes the notions about gender' naturalness'. Therefore, being a 'travesti' can break down the simple male/female binary thought and promote a breaking down of gender order stereotypes.

Being 'Travesti': reinforcing the binary gender order?

If the 'travesties' tend to 'denaturalize' the binary order, on the other hand they seem to reproduce it in many fields of social and everyday life, in particular on: 1) image and body performance, and 2) relational and sexual dynamics.

Image and Body Performance

Some 'travestis' build up their image, investing daily on body transformations. The body reflects the materialization of gender. It will carry the first outward signs of 'womanhood' in the body of "man": dressing up, make-up, waxing, eyes, body movements, postures, ways of walking.

> *Often I went to school with mascara on the eyes, sometimes with lipstick, without being Carnival. I think that my tendency to turn (...) travesty or transformista, comes from childhood. I always liked make-up, shoes (...), needles and dresses. It was always something that fascinated me. And now still fascinates me more ...*
>
> (Interview with Milan, day 02/17/2013)

They wish to present (and posses!) a body-image of an ideal woman, which may (or not) culminate with surgical interventions and silicone applications to model (in most cases in excess) the breasts, buttocks, thighs, legs and face. Usually they seek references in prestigious travestis and woman protagonists of the *media,* who symbolize the hyper-feminine female stereotype.

> *She [mother] told me: 'I want you to decide now. NOW!!". She screamed to me*

> *"YOU ARE A MAN OR YOU ARE A WOMAN because 'butterflies', here in my house, I do not want". she told me that if I wanted to be a man, I should go far away [...]. And I said "I wanted to be like Bruna", a* ***beautiful travesti friend of mine*** *[...]*
>
> (Interview with Samanta, day 03/21/2013)

This process of bodily gender construction requires a continuous surveillance effort to hide any signs of the "opposite" gender, resembling almost a struggle against masculinity.

> [During the demonstration of sex workers, on the 1st of May 2013, in Lisbon] *I watch Mary holding a sign that say "Sex Work is Work". While she walked along with the group I notice that, on several occasions, she withdrew from her purse a small round mirror and frequently looked herself in it. Other times she retouches the base that was placed, in her face with a small tissue, during the demonstration*
>
> (Field Journal, 01/05/2013)

These acts show us that they need to practice a constant self-observation in order to verify the presence of an acquired female identity. This autoscopy is like a control of any male evidence that might be publicly revealed.

Relacional and Sexual Dynamics

The reproduction and reinforcement of a binary order is also present in the relationships and sexual dynamics of travestis. In prostitution contexts, the classic client-type is the "maricona" - a man, often older, well presented, but adopting sexual positions culturally associated with a feminine passive (receptive) role. The "maricona" is often the target of scorn and contempt by travestis, whose masculinity can be "recovered" (not without subjective contradictions) when they must assume a top role (or performance) in sexual intercourse with a client, according to Barreda (1993).

> *When the man comes looking for a 'travesti', he does not come looking for pussy. He comes looking for cock. They don't want 'operated'. The man's fantasy is the female body, the way we dress, wedge, paintings and ... what we have hidden [...] The clients ask me "are you operated?", "do you have a dick?". If you have a dick, they want i. If you do not, they no longer want. Do you understand?*
>
> (Interview with Milan, day 02/17/2013)

It is in this prostitution context that travestis establish some relationships with boyfriends (usually called "husbands"). The "husband" is not only an element of protection and respectability among them, but also gives them a sense of 'normality' to legitimize their femininity.

> [Interviewer] - *Your boyfriends, like some clients, is also bottom?*
>
> [Respondent] - *No,* ***he's heterosexual!*** *I'll tell you one thing. This is one of my requirements for my boyfriend.* ***Bottom, no! Please!*** *Just me. Sorry about that. Can't be two people.* ***I'm bottom. I'm the woman! That role is mine*** *This is a requirement [...]*
>
> *I have to cover myself . He never saw my penis. NEVER! NEVER SAW! Never touched it [...] We have been together for some time. For 6 years. But [...] I don't feel good. It has to be with the lights off ...*
>
> (Interview with Catherine Day 12.03.2012).

The "husband" is prohibited to have practices that make travestis look manly, and conversely, that feminizes the "husband": to see her penis, to touch it, to look for anal caresses or to be penetrated. The sexual relationship is performed with rigid sexual 'roles', where the travesti has the stereotypical female role of bottom and the "husband" has the stereotypical male role of top. The roles are well ordered, as in hegemonic heteronormativity, because they allow for ontological security within the gender order.

Final Remarks

If the social construction of travestis' identity seems to reproduce the binary gender stereotypes, this same construction is paradoxically also resistant and rebels against the dominant paradigm by the very fact that we are faced with cross-gender trajectories. In fact, despite all the efforts employed by travestis in the construction of their female gender performance and body, they also recognize that travestis are not women. They acknowledge themselves female with male characteristics (or vice-versa), shaped by a constant and contradictory gender game (bodily, verbally, relationally, sexually, etc.) that flows between the two institutionalized poles of femininity and masculinity. Their gender identity, dispositions and performances may be flexible, but femininity is the ultimate goal. In a way they feel that they are never recognized not only as 'true' women (or men!), but also almost never recognized as

'true' persons (in the normalized sense of it), because trapped in a heterosexist gender system that shuns them as abnormal.

> *A travesti is seen **as a clown** who dresses in woman clothes, dazzles everywhere but she's nothing but a **fantasy** in life... Being travesti is to be **artificial**...*
>
> (Interview with Samanta, day 03/21/2013)

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